



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 37th Parliament

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

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 18 June 2001

Lundi 18 juin 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 18 June 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 18 juin 2001

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Welcome back, Speaker. We missed you last week.

My remarks today are for the Premier and for the Minister of Health. I want to speak again about a subject that has been on the lips of many of us in this Legislature in the last week or so, and that is the community care access centres and the plight that this government has put them in.

There's a bit of smoke and mirrors going on with this in that the Premier will get up and say, "Well, we haven't reduced the budgets of the CCACs one cent." That's right, their budgets are the same as last year, but we know that many of the CCACs across this province had to run deficits in order to provide minimum service to our frail, our elderly and our sick. In fact, if those budgets are frozen this year and not considered to be increased because of the increased need, there will be a \$175-million shortfall. We can't tolerate that. People—frail, elderly—are being released earlier and earlier, sicker and sicker from hospitals, and they need this community care. The need is out there. This is not just a shoddy ploy; this is serious business. Our citizens, our frail and our elderly, need the assistance of community care access centres, and I implore the government to provide them with that funding.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): I rise in the House today to talk about a situation that came about in the city of London over the past weekend. The issue is a serious one and ought not to be taken lightly.

On Saturday afternoon, June 16, there were two serious accidents and numerous other medical emergencies that overwhelmed our ambulance system. Other ambulances which were in London from Strathroy, St Thomas and Lambton county doing patient transfers accommodated the need for more ambulances. The ambulance system in this region is set up to respond and dispatch vehicles from neighbouring communities for unforeseen medical emergencies that may overwhelm the

system. In this case, the emergency plan worked and it worked well, as more ambulances were dispatched from the surrounding communities.

I have been speaking to paramedics and ambulance attendants from Thames Valley Emergency Medical Services for some time, and they have suggested that the problem lies with patient transfers. The ambulances used for patient transfers cause an artificial decrease in the number of ambulances available for medical emergencies. I want to bring this situation to the members of this House so that we can focus our attention on this problem. Patient transfers are important, but they are likely a constant, and those patient transfers take away from ambulance time in dealing with real emergencies.

I urge the Minister of Health and the county of Middlesex to work out this arrangement and have new resources for the city of London for ambulance services.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): It seems that the Mike Harris government has very little regard for the people who built the foundation of the province. Mike Harris says seniors should "thank God" they live in Ontario. Should they thank God because they are in a province that has the dubious distinction of having nursing homes where residents receive the least nursing, bathing and general care among those areas studied from around the world? Is that what Mike Harris was talking about when he said they should thank God because they have access to the best services anywhere in the world?

The Harris government's latest threat to put a means test on the drug benefit program for seniors is now another example of the Harris government's insensitivity toward the most vulnerable in our society. Senior citizens paid into the health care system and they deserve to collect on it.

The crisis the government has created in home care is also something they should be deeply ashamed of. Essentially, they are forcing seniors out of their homes and into institutions because there isn't sufficient home care available. At the same time, they are giving their corporate friends massive tax breaks. This is a bitter pill for seniors to swallow.

In my constituency office I hear from seniors day by day about the health care system. They have watched as emergency rooms overflow and hospitals close their

doors, and now they have to sit by and watch the government threaten their drug plan.

Ontario's seniors deserve our gratitude for all they have done for us. They have fought in the wars, they have defended our freedom, they have witnessed history, and they continue to pass on their knowledge and wisdom. They almost single-handedly power the volunteer sector of our society and work tirelessly to make things better for us and those around the world. They deserve better than they are getting from this government.

AUREL BISSON

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Mr Speaker, you know that the last week or so I haven't been here due to the passing of my father. I want to acknowledge to the members in the House how touching it was—the comments, the letters, the phone calls, the faxes, the e-mails from all members of this assembly, and people across the communities.

I didn't think I was going to do this, but you would know my dad was a bit of an institution around the Legislature. He often was here in the galleries watching the House. He loved this place probably more than most people realized. He understood what our role here is: to serve not only our parties but also our constituents and our constituencies. He sat in those bleachers, as he called them, on both sides, on the government side from 1990 to 1995 and from 1995 to lately on the opposition side, watching what we did, always with a good sense of humour.

A lot of the members of the assembly knew my dad because they would go over to talk to him from all sides of the House. It's ironic that he died in a week that he was supposed to be here. We were supposed to fly together on the Monday, but unfortunately, because of weather and fog that day, ended up having to take a commercial flight. It cleared up the next day. He went out fishing, cranked on the motor probably harder than he should have, and died of a heart attack while fishing.

I want to just acknowledge all the members of the assembly, the legislative staff, the caucus staff, people across the constituencies and across northern Ontario who called our family, came to visit, did everything they could in support. On behalf of myself, my mother, my brother and my sister, I really want to thank you for what you have done. It's been quite touching.

To dad, God, I'm going to miss you. Thanks, dad.

ALLAN LAWRENCE

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to recognize an outstanding individual from Cobourg, the Honourable Allan Lawrence.

On June 6, Mr Lawrence received recognition from the legal profession for his extraordinary contributions. He was one of five recipients of the law society medal given by the Law Society of Upper Canada.

Mr Lawrence has had a long legal and political career, which includes a law practice with a Toronto firm for some 15 years and recent retirement as a senior mediator and arbitrator with Arbitration Associates, a firm he founded in 1988.

Mr Lawrence has also served on many committees during his career, such as vice-chairman of the ADR committee and membership on the legal aid, research and planning, legal education and equity committees. Currently he is the vice-chairman of the paralegal task force and a member of the national WTO committee for the law society.

His political career is also extremely impressive. A member of Parliament from 1972 to 1988, he was the Solicitor General of Canada and Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs during the Joe Clark administration and Canadian chairman of the Canada-US Permanent Joint Board on Defence from 1984 to 1989.

With personal regards, I congratulate the Honourable Allan Lawrence for his achievements and for receiving the law society medal.

1340

GAY PRIDE WEEK

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I want to rise today and remind all members that this is the official kick-off of Gay Pride Week here in the city of Toronto. Earlier today I had the opportunity to join hundreds of members of Toronto's gay community and Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman, former mayor Barbara Hall and other distinguished guests in the raising of the pride flag, the rainbow flag, which is flying over city hall as we speak.

The theme of Gay Pride Week this year is love. It is, I think, a fitting theme. A community like ours is broad and diverse and has gained many achievements in our province, and yet there is one thing that we lack, and that is the right to marry. Many gays and lesbians will be pushing for this, because it is the ultimate symbol of love between two loving adults. That's what we'll be pushing for.

But it isn't just Toronto that celebrates pride this week. All across the province of Ontario, Ontario-wide pride is occurring. In communities like Chatham and Sarnia, Ottawa, Kingston, Halton, Hamilton, London, in York region, in Sudbury and in Windsor gays and lesbians and their friends and supporters will be joining together in an embrace and celebration of cultural and sexual orientation diversity.

I invite all members who have not experienced 750,000 people coming together in the city of Toronto, with an economic impact of more than \$40 million, to join with me this Sunday at 2 o'clock in a parade, an experience that I guarantee them they will enjoy and remember forever.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):

Recently a volunteer summit was held in my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant as part of the International Year of the Volunteer. This summit was designed to recognize outstanding commitments made in our communities, as well as to attract new volunteers. I am proud to say that this summit was very well attended. In Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant we have many dedicated individuals who give so selflessly of their time and their efforts.

Today, I'd like to highlight the achievements of Ohsweken resident Glenda Porter. On April 26, Glenda was presented with one of 20 outstanding achievement awards for volunteerism in Ontario for her dedication to the Six Nations Skating Club.

Glenda helped to develop the Six Nations Skating Club in 1976. Over the past 26 years, she has been president for 14 years, she has been carnival director, treasurer, test chairman and membership director. One year, Glenda sewed close to 60 carnival costumes by herself to ensure every single skater would be wearing something unique.

Aside from all the meetings she has had to attend for the skating club, Glenda has found time to join a host of other clubs and organizations within her community.

It is people like Glenda who make our communities and the province of Ontario a richer place to live, raise a family and work. I congratulate Glenda and I commend her on her many years of hard and often unnoticed work.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):

Today I would like to bring to the attention of the Minister of Health an example of the cuts to our health care system that is similar to many others across the province.

Jean Scott, an 87-year-old lady from Lancaster, previously had knee surgery. The pain has reoccurred, and she is hardly able to walk. She now requires further surgery, and her physician has referred her to a specialist.

Guess what? The specialist is unable to see her for six months. This story gets even worse. The waiting period for surgery is another 12 months. This is ridiculous. As my leader, Dalton McGuinty, has said many times, people cannot wait months or years for medical treatment when they are ill and suffering.

Since 1999 the federal government has transferred more than \$2 billion for health care in Ontario. Where is that money? People have seen serious cuts to health care services, doctor shortages, clinic closures, cancer care cuts, MRIs not available, and the list goes on. Your government must ensure that health care services are available. Minister, Mrs Scott needs this operation and she needs it now, not 18 months from now.

I ask the minister today: guarantee to the people of Ontario that you will reinstate funding to our health care

system to help people like Mrs Scott and not divert money from our health care system to pay tax credits.

ECOPARK

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): It is an honour to rise today to pay tribute to those dedicated to EcoPark in the city of Vaughan in my riding of Thornhill. EcoPark, which runs along the West Don River, was ignored by almost everyone nine years ago. That was when two local environmentalists, Kevin McLaughlin and Michael White, launched a bid to revitalize it.

Since then, students from seven schools planted 10,000 trees and shrubs. Nearby companies helped create a marsh. EcoPark has become one of the largest restoration projects in the entire Don watershed.

It is far more than just a trail and a few trees. It provides a car-free pass for cycling to work, it provides a nice lunching spot and it provides an area for people to just take a nice walk and enjoy nature.

At least one local environmentalist sees great things for the park. He sees it as one day being an important part of an interregional trail system. EcoPark will be a gateway to the Oak Ridges moraine, and from there to other trail systems. It will allow people to walk south from Concord to Toronto and Lake Ontario. EcoPark will be a destination itself, a place to enjoy nature, relax and birdwatch.

It is my pleasure today to acknowledge all of those dedicated to our environment and to our community who have worked to make EcoPark a reality. With vision and hard work, nothing is impossible.

VISITOR

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain):

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to inform the House and welcome my daughter, Joanna Tsanis, who's in the members' gallery today from grade 4, Rousseau school, Hamilton.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE ACT, 2001

Mr Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr18, An Act respecting Conrad Grebel University College.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Mr Speaker, as you well know, the standing orders preclude that ministers of the crown introduce private bills. On behalf of the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, I move that leave be given to introduce a bill entitled An Act respecting Conrad Grebel University College, and that it be now be read for the first time.

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

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

MASTER'S COLLEGE AND SEMINARY ACT, 2001

Mr Stewart moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr12, An Act respecting Master's College and Seminary (formerly Eastern Pentecostal Bible College).

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

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): This is a motion dealing with evening sittings. I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, June 18, Tuesday, June 19, and Wednesday, June 20, 2001, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

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

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.
Arnott, Ted	Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia
Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Gerretsen, John	Newman, Dan
Boutrogianni, Marie	Gilchrist, Steve	Parsons, Ernie
Boyer, Claudette	Hastings, John	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Hudak, Tim	Pupatello, Sandra
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Cleary, John C.	Johnson, Bert	Sergio, Mario
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Smitherman, George
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Snobelen, John
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Stewart, R. Gary
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Stockwell, Chris
Crozier, Bruce	Marland, Margaret	Tasca, Joseph N.
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn	Wilson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	McMeekin, Ted	Witmer, Elizabeth
Ecker, Janet	Miller, Norm	Young, David

The Speaker: Those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Marchese, Rosario
Hampton, Howard	Lankin, Frances	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 63; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITORS

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the west gallery today we have the very original and new group from Brantford who call themselves the Breakfast Club, comprised of Al Cooper, an award-winning stylist; Mike Swanson, an international award-winning illustrator; John Szasz, an award-winning designer, developer and builder; Brian Heap, a long-time community volunteer; and Russ Faber, our retired postmaster of Brantford.

They've joined us today to watch the workings of democracy.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our guests.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I'll be asking for unanimous consent for two separate motions. Just to be clear what we're talking about here, it's been worked out among the House leaders to swap private members' business this Thursday among three members here in the House. I will obviously need unanimous consent for that motion and to waive the notice for one of the members.

I'll start by seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I move, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), that the following changes be made to the ballot lists for private members' public business:

Mr Kwinter and Mr Lalonde exchange places in order of precedence, such that Mr Kwinter assumes ballot item number 51 and Mr Lalonde assumes ballot item number 28; and

Mr Lalonde and Mr Guzzo exchange places in order of precedence, such that Mr Lalonde assumes ballot item number 15 and Mr Guzzo assumes ballot item number 28.

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

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding the notice requirements of one of those bills.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I move, re standing order 96(g) with respect to ballot item number 28, that the usual notice be waived.

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

1400

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, first you accused hospital board members of intellectual dishonesty in trying to tell you what would happen if you continue to force cuts on hospital budgets. Then you accused them of putting forward budgets that contained everything but the kitchen sink. You weren't prepared to believe hospitals, so they went out and bought not one but two independent studies. Those studies make it absolutely clear that hospitals are underfunded by some \$700 million. Those studies also said clearly that if hospitals don't get the \$700 million, there will be more beds closed, longer waits for surgery, more ambulances waiting in driveways to deliver their patients, more people being sent home sick because there is no room for them in hospital.

In last month's budget, you cut hospital funds instead of increasing them. Now you say you're prepared to find them some more money. I ask you today, how much are you prepared to put into hospital budgets, and when will you tell hospitals what their budgets will actually be?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member mentions a study that was commissioned by the hospital association. A simple question was asked, and that question was, "If the hospital budgets were diminished by 8.3%, what would be the impact on the hospitals?" The impacts are as the honourable member has listed. I can tell the honourable member and this House that we have absolutely no intention of decreasing hospital budgets by 8.3%. We have absolutely no intention of decreasing hospital budgets. So the premise of the report, fortunately for this province, for the patients of this province and for the hospitals of this province is incorrect.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, in last month's budget you said you were going to cut hospital budgets by \$100 million, not increase them. Now you say you're going to increase them. They need to know now what their budgets are going to be. The crisis is now.

Last week, a man came into Queensway walk-in centre—it used to be a hospital, now it's a walk-in centre; you closed it as a hospital—with a heart attack. He was initially treated there but had to be transferred to a hospital where his heart attack could be cared for. He was being transferred to a hospital, Markham-Stouffville hospital, an hour and a half away because there was not a

single bed in any Toronto hospital for that critically ill patient.

If the hospitals don't get the \$700 million they need, there will be 2,000 more acute care beds closed on top of the 8,000 beds you've already closed. There will be 73,000 fewer hospital admissions. I suggest to you we can't wait till the next inquest to get the hospital funding.

If you are planning to find more money for hospitals, you should be able to tell them now, today, what their funding will be. Will you tell hospitals immediately what the least they will get is so some of those layoffs and bed closures can be prevented?

Hon Mr Clement: I find myself in a problematic situation. You've only given me a minute to respond, and there are at least five minutes' worth of inaccuracies in the question, but I will endeavour to say this to comfort the people of Ontario who might be alarmed by the alarmist comments of the member opposite.

We have no intention of giving hospitals less money—never had; never will. Indeed, we have increased hospital funding—operating funding—by over 25% since the 1998-99 fiscal year. So this is a level of support that's unprecedented in Ontario.

The fundamental premise of the question is wrong. The predictions she has for the system are wrong. This ministry, this government, stands on the side of better patient care, more accountable patient care and better outcomes. Maybe the honourable member can be on that side as well, but she hasn't been so far.

Mrs McLeod: Perhaps the minister is now putting me into the same category that he's put hospital board members, and two independent consulting firms who did independent studies suggesting that we're all guilty of intellectual dishonesty. Perhaps he'll say it is simply inaccurate that if hospitals don't get the \$700 million, they're going to have to lay off some 6,000 nurses and that that would cost this government \$200 million in severance costs. Perhaps he thinks it's common sense to put \$200 million into severing 6,000 nurses rather than deal with the reality of hospital budgets.

Minister, instead of talking about inaccuracies, let's talk about promises made and whether they're going to be kept. Last week you made promises to hospitals. You promised them that you were going to give them some more money, and you haven't told them how much or when it's coming. You also promised them that you were going to exempt them from legislation that would require hospitals to have balanced budgets.

Minister, you are right back to the old games. You're going to force the hospitals to cut as far as they can cut, and then, at the end of the year, you'll come in and provide some money to cover the gap and say you've increased the budget.

If you're not planning to let hospitals run deficits because you're not giving them the funding they need, if that's not what you're planning, then tell us exactly what you've promised to hospitals.

Hon Mr Clement: Again I have to correct the record. The fact of the matter is, first of all, we are reviewing the

operating plans to hospitals. She knows this happens every year. We will not finish the review until we are satisfied that patient care is maximized and accountability is maximized.

Here's what one leader has said in the past on these issues. The leader has said, and this is a quote from CBC radio news: "People told him over the summer that money isn't the answer. He says they know the health care system needs to be fundamentally reformed if the problems are going to be fixed."

That leader is Dalton McGuinty. That's what Dalton McGuinty said on September 13, 2000.

I just ask the question, what has changed? On this side of the House we're for accountability, we're for better patient care and we're for better results. I thought they were on the same side. Evidently they're not.

HOME CARE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health. You've already created an absolute mess in dealing with our hospitals. You are getting exactly the opposite of what you say you expect out of the system, and it's due to your own mismanagement of this system. What you have caused in hospital chaos has now leapt over into the home care field, and now we have an absolute mess in home care. You have gone to the community care access centres and you've said, "You're going to be flatlined. You're not getting any more money to deal with very sick people that the hospitals are throwing into the home care system." You knew, it was predictable, that home care cases would increase because you're throwing them out of the hospitals.

I want to talk to you about those who are facing long waiting lists and reduced home care services as a result of your funding. I want to talk to you about Mr Dwyer in Cambridge, who came home last week after undergoing brain tumour surgery. He's got to wait nine months for help, and his wife, Kay, said, "We're looking after him the best we can, but we're not trained to do this."

Minister, what do you have to say to Kay and her husband?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I would say to any citizen in Ontario that we are committed to a home care system that does prioritize the things they care about, particularly nursing care. I would say to the honourable member and to people in Ontario that we have been there for home care services. We've increased CCAC funding, home care funding, by 72%, including an extra \$64 million this year, as a result of a \$550-million multi-year commitment for increased home care services. That's what I would say to any persons who have concerns as a result of alarmist views or the opposition's interpretation of facts that something else is happening, because it isn't happening the way the honourable member describes it.

We are in fact having the reinvestments that are necessary, and that is in the home care sector as well.

1410

Mrs Pupatello: Finally, the community care access centres are telling exactly what is happening to the people in Ontario thanks to your funding, Minister. Don't talk to me about being alarmist. Don't suggest that we are exaggerating, because we are getting the facts from the front lines, from people who care for patients. Tell these patients who are doing without care about the wonderful job you've done in home care.

I want to talk to you about what the Premier said last week. He said, "Thank God our seniors live in Ontario." What kind of foolish statement was that to make?

I want to tell you about Mrs Muldoon. She's 88 years old, a paraplegic with a catheter. She's bedridden and suffers from severe bed sores and possible dementia. Her son has been providing around-the-clock care. He used to get 14 hours of respite care. Thanks to your cuts, that respite care is now reduced to four hours. Can you please tell the Muldoons why they should thank God they live in Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: I think we're all proud to be living in Ontario. That's why we live here and we work here to raise our families. I would not exclude seniors from that category, as the honourable member is seeking to do.

The facts are clear. When one looks at services for seniors in home care, long-term-care services, in comparison with other provinces, we are second to none, and that's 100% provincial dollars. Not a dime, not a nickel, not a pfennig of federal money goes into these programs, and that is fact. The fact is, this is 100% provincial money. When you compare it to other provincial jurisdictions, we are the leaders of the pack in terms of investing for our seniors' safety and comfort in the future. That is something of which, on this side of the House, we are quite proud.

Mrs Pupatello: If you're so busy investing—you just come up and make up any number at all and say, "That's what we're giving to home care." You just make up anything at all and think we're going to believe you.

Minister, the reality is that these individuals in their homes are getting less service today than they used to, and some of these seniors need this money to stay in their homes. That was the whole point of home care in the first place. Home care is about prevention and it's about staying in their own homes. You take away the people's in-home supports, and guess where they're going to end up. They're going to end up back in hospital. As my colleague mentioned, you're cutting the hospital budgets, so what are these people to do? They're not getting the service they need at home. They go back to the hospital. You're cutting the money to hospitals. Where do you think the people are going to go?

Minister, you have a responsibility. Don't talk about these macro numbers. You have got to get back and manage this system. These individuals requiring home care need service to stay in their homes, and under your government, under your watch, these services are being cut.

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member is sinking very close to the person who said, "Don't confuse the issue with facts."

If the honourable member doesn't like the facts and figures, I can talk about local cases. Here are two local cases. Let's take Oxford, for example, where in the Oxford Sentinel Review the chair of the CCAC said, "At this point there is no concern about decreasing services," given the budget numbers they have to work with this year. But I don't leave it at that. Here's another case: in York region—I don't know why that region particularly came to mind, but it did—here's a comment from The Liberal, which is a publication in York region. The Liberal says, "Since 1994, funding in York has risen 193%... It's time for the centres to examine the efficiency of their operations." I finally found a Liberal I can agree with.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education and it concerns her tax credit for private schools. Minister, New Democrats want to know why you are going to use public money to fund discrimination.

In a survey of Ontario private schools conducted over the last two weeks, 60 private schools across Ontario were asked, "What percentage of your students are disabled?" The answer is shocking: 76% do not have one disabled student. Minister, how can you use public money to fund such a pattern of discrimination?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): We are not using public money to discriminate in any way, shape or form in any sector. As the honourable member knows, that would be against the law.

Mr Hampton: As the minister knows, private schools are exempt from the Ontario Human Rights Code. We settled that with the Premier a few weeks ago.

What is more disturbing, when you ask these private schools, is that 71% do not have any kind of human rights code of their own. They do not prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion, disability, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Your tax credit is about using public money to fund that kind of systemic behaviour.

Tell us again, Minister: justify using public money to fund that kind of discrimination.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member can keep repeating it if he wants to, as long as he wants to. That doesn't make it true.

Quite frankly, for him to stand in this place and accuse independent schools—for example, from the Jewish community, from the Muslim community, from the Christian community—that somehow or other they are bastions of intolerance and racial hatred, I find quite offensive, and I think most Ontarians would agree with me.

Mr Hampton: Minister, in case you missed it, what Ontario citizens agree with is a Human Rights Code that says you cannot, as an institution, choose on the basis of ability or disability, on the basis of ethnicity, on the basis of age or sex or any of those things. You know that under the Human Rights Code and under your government's policy with respect to your tax credit, you're going to allow all those things to happen. You know there are no standards being brought down by your government. You know they're exempted from the Human Rights Code, and you know that many of these schools do not have their own human rights code.

So I ask you again, Minister: justify taking money out of the public education system and putting it into a private system that clearly discriminates. How do you justify that?

Hon Mrs Ecker: We are not in the habit of justifying things that are not true.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is to the Minister of Health, but I would say to the Minister of Education, read your own Human Rights Code.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): You can't say anything to the Minister of Education. It's to the Minister of Health. You need to go to the Minister of Health for the next question, please.

Mr Hampton: Well, Speaker, I can use my time any way I wish, I think.

The Speaker: You said to whom you were asking the question, and you can ask the question. That person has to be the one who answers the question.

You may proceed, and your time has started, so you've got less than a minute now.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you have received over four reports in the last six months from KPMG, from Deloitte and Touche, and from PricewaterhouseCoopers that tell you that you are underfunding the health care system from one end to the other, whether it's long-term care, community care or hospitals.

I note that these companies, like PricewaterhouseCoopers and KPMG, are some of your favourite companies when they happen to agree with you. Now that they are issuing reports that say you are underfunding the system, can you tell us why you're not so quick to agree with them, when you are so quick to agree with them all the other times?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Some of my best friends are accountants. I can say to the honourable member that I do agree with the conclusion. The problem is a difference of premise when it comes to the KPMG report. I said in this House, and I'll say again, that if this government were planning or were implementing an 8.3% decrease in hospital funding, I suppose all the terrible things KPMG mentioned as a logical result of that would come to pass. But fortunately for everyone who is involved in the provision

of quality health services to the people of Ontario, that is not occurring. There is no 8.3% decline in funding. Indeed, funding has gone up year after year as long as Mike Harris has been Premier. Funding has gone up year after year; indeed, over 25% since 1998. That is the most accurate thing I can say about that.

In terms of the PWC report, I can tell the honourable member that, again, the report was commissioned by us, and it recognized some managerial problems that had to be solved with the CCACs. We agree with the report on that as well.

Mr Hampton: Minister, all I can say is that when these companies happen to agree with your government, you're so quick to cite their studies. KPMG has said to you that because of your underfunding of the hospital sector, you're looking at 6,000 lost jobs, 73,000 fewer admissions to hospital, 2,200 fewer hospital beds and 900,000 fewer outpatient visits.

In terms of the CCACs, the PricewaterhouseCoopers study and other studies point out to you that if you were to take their advice, you can actually in the longer term save some money for the health care system. That is what they are really telling you, that your direction of underfunding CCACs this year, forcing more patients into hospitals, into long-term-care facilities, into emergency rooms is going to cost you more money, which then creates the need in the hospitals. Four studies. Your government otherwise is only too happy to agree with these companies. What's wrong with them now? Why don't you follow their advice now, Minister?

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Hon Mr Clement: Again, let's make sure we all agree on what we're talking about here. The KPMG report said that without adequate funding—and their definition of “without adequate funding” was an 8.3% decline in funding levels. Then you would get fewer patient services, up to 73,000 in patient admissions, 2,200 fewer staff beds etc. Fortunately, despite the Cassandras on the other side, that isn't happening. When it comes to the PWC report, it's very clear that there are managerial issues that have to be solved; there are standards issues that have to be solved with our CCACs. If those issues are solved, we can be assured that more money goes to the front lines, goes to the nurses, goes to the home care providers that are contracted for by our CCACs to help our seniors, help our elderly, help those who are handicapped and reliant upon the system. We agree with that report.

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Deputy Premier. We heard the news late last week that the RCMP conducted—some people would call it a raid—let's call it a sweep, of the Premier's office to try to obtain, apparently, evidence and documents that are being hidden by the government, because why else would they be there?

On at least two occasions the RCMP have been forced to go into the Premier's office to look for documents and

evidence that apparently were not forthcoming, despite the assurance in this House of the Premier that he would be fully co-operative with the inquiry and with the commission. Can the Deputy Premier tell us today why it is that the RCMP would then have to sweep into the Premier's office to obtain documents and evidence, if indeed the Premier had said that all evidence was available to anyone in the commission who wanted it?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I thank the member opposite for the question. In response, in fact the Office of the Premier has co-operated fully with the commission, with the O'Connor inquiry looking into the events in Walkerton. All of us want to get to the bottom of what happened in Walkerton. That indeed is why the government appointed Mr Justice O'Connor to conduct the inquiry.

There has been no forced transfer of documents. There has been no situation in which documents have not been forthcoming. In fact, every deadline for document production has been met, every deadline set by the commission has been met by the Premier's office, even extremely tight deadlines have been met by the Premier's office, and thousands and thousands of documents have been provided. As the Premier said initially when Mr Justice O'Connor was appointed, we will co-operate fully with the inquiry, which is exactly what the government has been doing.

Mr Bradley: The Deputy Premier can look as solemn and serious as he wants about this and look into the camera and tell everyone that somehow everything has been produced. We get back to the question, however. If there was so much co-operation with the commission, if all the documentation was provided, I have to ask the Deputy Premier why it is, then, the RCMP on at least two occasions would have to conduct a raid on the Premier's office to be able to obtain that information.

Everybody recognizes that all the major decisions in this government are made in the Premier's office. We recognize that a lot of documents have been filtered through the Premier's office, documents that start out one way and end up another way when they appear before the policy and priorities board of cabinet. So I go back to the Deputy Premier to ask him, if all those documents were voluntarily provided to the commission, why would they on two occasions have to have the RCMP come in to investigate?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I appreciate the fact that the member opposite feels my assurances are insufficient, so perhaps the assurances of the counsel to the commission will be sufficient for the member opposite.

Paul Cavalluzzo, as reported in the Toronto Star last week, said, “The Premier's staff co-operated fully with the RCMP's Wednesday search.

“The purpose of the visit was that we have an RCMP member who is an expert in computers who we had do imaging from computers in the Premier's office,” Cavalluzzo said. ‘It should be noted that this visit was done with the full co-operation of the Premier's office. It wasn't a raid in any sense.

“It’s just that in the natural course of the inquiry, that’s how we obtain documents.”

All documents requested have been produced. The visit was at the request of the commission and was a matter of full co-operation by the Premier’s office. It’s important that we get to the bottom of what happened at Walkerton, and I’m sure the honourable member opposite agrees.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): My question is to the Minister of Health. This past weekend, we had a serious situation in London: a couple of serious motor vehicle accidents. One scene consumed five ambulances, and certainly my hopes are that those people are OK. The emergency plan in London did work well; surrounding communities’ ambulances responded to take on some of the other emergency calls.

Just a few months ago I had to call for an ambulance myself when my son fell and cut himself and started bleeding profusely. I can tell all members of this Legislature, no matter what kind of training you’ve had, and I’ve had some, when it’s your own child you do not do well under those circumstances.

The people in London want, certainly need, more ambulance service, and this has been an issue that’s been going on now for some time: the 50-50 funding arrangement. Will the province of Ontario commit more funds for Middlesex county for ambulance services?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for London-Fanshawe for his question and for describing some of the personal ways in which ambulance services can be of assistance to citizens.

In the year-end 2000-01, the government of Ontario provided approximately \$410 million for emergency health services, and about 75% of that was allocated to the provision of land ambulance services. In Middlesex county they did submit a request for 50% funding, which is the norm, and that request for provincial funding was approved as is. As part of that 50%, we provided 50% funding for two additional ambulances for Middlesex, one of which went into service in December of last year and the other in January of this year.

Certainly, the provision of excellent ambulance services in Middlesex is on our minds.

Mr Mazzilli: I’ve been speaking to paramedics and so on about these two extra ambulances, and I’m not sure where the problem is, whether the county is not committed, but certainly we need these two ambulances on the road.

I will be following up on this issue, because I believe one of the big problems here is patient transfer. Although we have a complement of eight ambulances, when you look at it, two or three ambulances are, on a constant basis, conducting patient transfers from other areas or to other areas. In the case of Saturday, we actually benefited from patient transfers because two ambulances were in

town from other jurisdictions and helped with emergency calls.

Minister, I will be following this up with your office, and I certainly believe that London needs more than the current eight ambulances that we have on the road.

Hon Mr Clement: Again, I thank the honourable member for putting his perspective on the table, and clearly there is work afoot that he is leading in his community to see what impediments are in the way that can be removed, and I commend him for that. A lot of the municipalities, now that they are seized of this issue with the land ambulance transfer, are looking at new and innovative ways to reduce some of the pressure. In Toronto, in London and in Peel region, my own region, there are a number of medical transportation initiatives looking at ways to transport patients in non-emergency situations in different and creative ways.

I want the honourable member to know and this House to know that this ministry and myself have publicly indicated our willingness to discuss these issues with the municipalities to come to mutually agreeable solutions that work for people in Ontario.

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HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Safety-Kleen, Minister, is the largest toxic hazardous landfill and incinerator in Canada and it’s located in St Clair township in my riding. Do you know, 70% of that waste comes from outside Ontario.

You and I understand that it’s within provincial jurisdiction to refuse or accept toxic hazardous waste being dumped in this province. There was one leak on the site in 1999, and now it’s come to my attention that there is yet another leak. I am asking you, Minister, if because of the landfill toxic hazardous waste—we’ve been called the garbage can for toxic waste. I’d like to know if you will make rules, Minister, or legislation for toxic landfills as tough as those in the United States.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of the Environment): I am truly pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the member opposite, because it appears the member opposite is not aware of the amendments that this province undertook on March 31 of this year to strengthen our hazardous waste framework.

I am pleased to say that we now have the toughest standards and framework in Ontario’s history. At that time we introduced stringent new testing requirements and we expanded the list of known toxic chemicals from 31 to 88 chemicals. I’m very pleased to say that we are well ahead of the 40 that are identified in the United States regulation. We also brought “derived from” standards in line with the US EPA. Again, we have moved forward to very, very much ensure that the hazardous waste policy in this province is as strong as it should be.

Ms Di Cocco: Minister, “as strong as it should be” is not as strong as that of the United States or stronger. You

understand—I know you do—the danger to public health by the increase in the dumping of hazardous waste.

We have an incinerator there as well, and the future environmental impact of that incinerator and the increased use of that incinerator. I have written and have requested that we make sure we have a full public environmental assessment before we increase the incinerator. You have responded that there doesn't need to be a full public environmental assessment on the incinerator. Therefore, you are telling me that it's the greatest in Ontario's history, but compared to the United States, it isn't, and the incinerator doesn't need a full environmental assessment. Minister, are you going to accept responsibility for groundwater contamination and for people's health when it comes to the effects of the incinerator?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I recognize that the member was not aware of the new hazardous waste framework that came into effect in March of this year, but I'm pleased now that she is informed. So I guess subsequently she has asked another question regarding Safety-Kleen. As she knows full well, she did bring this issue to my attention. We have responded. In response to the request to deal with the Safety-Kleen site, an on-site inspector has been hired. That action was taken to provide an immediate and enhanced level of monitoring at that facility.

Again, if she has any new concerns whatsoever, I would encourage her, as I've encouraged her in the past, to bring them forward to the ministry in order that we can determine any further steps that need to be taken to ensure that the environment and the health of people in that community can be protected.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. Minister, I recently had the privilege of presenting an Ontario Trillium Foundation cheque in the amount of \$203,300 over three years to the Peel lunch and after-school program. This funding will help this excellent program to recruit more high school volunteers and to develop volunteer programs with local community-based organizations.

Our government has a strong record of assisting social service agencies through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, but in the past couple of years there has been new competition for Trillium funding from arts, culture, recreation and environmental organizations. Minister, can you explain why Trillium funding is now being allocated to a wider variety of sectors?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation): I appreciate the question from the member for Mississauga South, and I want to congratulate all people involved with the Peel lunch and after-school program. I know the member herself is a very strong supporter of the good work they're doing in the community of Mississauga. The member is right: we have expanded those who are eligible for the Trillium

program under the Mike Harris government; for example, the arts and culture community, recreation, as well as environmental projects.

Interjection: Bocce ball.

Hon Mr Hudak: Bocce would be included as well. A very strong bocce club in Port Colborne, as a matter of fact, received a grant from Trillium under the previous minister, Helen Johns. That was done to reflect a need in the community to reflect some of the funding that was going to charities before. Not only, though, I would say to the member, have we expanded those eligible projects, but we have increased the funding to the Trillium Foundation by more than 10 times the value under previous governments, now \$100 million from our charitable gaming initiatives to support good projects in communities like Mississauga South.

Mrs Marland: Over the past 20 years PLASP—Peel lunch and after-school program—under the dynamic leadership of Sylvia Leal has been an exemplary role model for many organizations in Peel and across Ontario. In my riding of Mississauga South and across Ontario, there are a number of other fine organizations looking for support from Trillium to help them continue with their work and expand their involvement.

As you mentioned, with the new eligibility of the arts, culture and recreation sectors, there are even more priorities to be balanced. How does the Trillium Foundation balance priorities when making their decisions among the many groups seeking support?

Hon Mr Hudak: I thank the member for a very insightful question; hopefully my response will be instructive. The member is right. There are over 300 community volunteers involved in the Trillium Foundation on 16 regional grant review teams. The reason we're doing that is just as the member had expected: we want to make sure that local priorities are reflected among the local grant review teams so they can come forth with important priorities in their particular communities, whether it's arts and culture, recreation, the environment or social services.

Most important of all, the goal of the Trillium Foundation is to bring a very strong community spirit and pride, to build strong and vibrant communities for investment in job creation. I want to commend all the Trillium volunteers and the 16 grant review teams for their hard work and the number of hours they put in evaluating projects and bringing forward good projects like the Peel lunch and after-school program, and to tell them on behalf of the Mike Harris government to continue to do their good work.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of Community and Social Services: Minister, how can you be content to let adults with severe disabilities languish in institutions, under questionable circumstances, when their own parents say these people would

be better off at home with them? In today's Globe and Mail we read about a woman with cerebral palsy who wants to live at home, but your government won't give her the money to get the round-the-clock care she needs to do it.

In my own riding, you're well aware of 31-year-old Hasit Khagram, who has been confined like a laboratory rat to an institutional room where he can't even have human contact with his own distraught mother. Hasit has autism, and the longer he's holed up in a room alone, the quicker he regresses. His mother's in a panic. She needs proper funding to be able to get the round-the-clock care Hasit would need to be able to live with his family again. How can you ignore that plea?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Expanding opportunities for community living is a priority for the government. I can't talk about particular cases because I don't have permission to talk about their personal health information in public.

I can say we've brought in record investment. Two years ago, we increased funding for developmental disabilities by \$35 million, and last year by \$50 million. Earlier this month the Minister of Finance, on behalf of the government, announced an unprecedented investment to expand community living, to expand supports to people in their own home, or building more group home beds, putting more money into community-based services like respite care, behaviour management and a range of other supports to help people live with the dignity they deserve.

Mr Kormos: In dignity, Minister? I know Hasit; I know his mother. Hasit Khagram's future lies very much in your hands. Hasit's mother lost custody of her son last summer because you sought custody and a judge ruled she didn't get enough money from your ministry to get the help she needs to keep Hasit at home.

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Since then, he has been thrown into an institution. Things have gone downhill. He walks around in soiled underwear. He urinates on the floor. He pounds his face with his own clenched fist. He rips out his own fingernails. He's locked up in solitary confinement with one single piece of furniture bolted to the floor, as he's viewed through Plexiglas.

He has no human contact. He hasn't been outdoors for over six months. His mother is denied human contact with her own son. She has to speak to him through small holes drilled in the Plexiglas, where Hasit whimpers, "Mommy, home. Mommy, home."

Tell me, Minister, is it worth saving a few bucks to watch a young man, a human being, languish like Hasit in the hell you've created for him?

Hon Mr Baird: The situation the member describes is obviously an incredibly disturbing one. This government has made this area a tremendous priority. I cannot, and I do not think it would be appropriate if I were to, discuss people's personal health information here on the floor of

the Legislature. You mentioned a circumstance where an issue of custody arose. I'm obviously not going to get involved and discuss that.

I can say we have provided an unprecedented commitment, by more than a \$250 million, to expand community living. We're providing substantial supports to associations for community living right across the province. We're providing substantial supports to build up capacity, to have stronger communities and stronger families.

As the member opposite will know, I am always available to discuss cases on a case-by-case basis, and if there are ways we can look to to provide additional support, I would be more than pleased to sit down and talk to you about them.

RED TAPE COMMISSION

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Chair of Management Board, and it concerns the Red Tape Commission. You will know, Minister, as do more and more members of this Legislature, that the Red Tape Commission is apparently a very influential body that was created by the Harris government some five or six years ago.

My question today is a very simple one: given the extraordinary mandate of the Red Tape Commission, can you tell the Legislature this afternoon what specific confidentiality rules and oaths of secrecy apply to the members of the Red Tape Commission, given the very sensitive information with which they apparently deal?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): First of all, with respect to the Red Tape Commission, over the past several years they have created a very positive initiative for this government. Because of that, thousands and thousands of needless red tape measures in government, particularly from previous governments, have been gotten rid of. This has made a better climate for business. These are things the people, the electorate, have been asking for. They were key parts of our platform.

The Red Tape Commission deals with process questions. This is what we're dealing with, by and large. These are things with needless red tape; for example, we're talking about things like not being able to stock bars in hotels on Sundays. The Red Tape Commission deals with processes; they don't deal with confidential information. This is what we have enabled them to do.

Mr Conway: Let me tell you what the cabinet office is telling us the Red Tape Commission does. "According to Ontario's cabinet office, the Red Tape Commission is inextricably" linked "to the cabinet decision-making process. The Red Tape Commission reviews policy proposals, draft legislation, cabinet submissions" etc. It is quite clear that the Red Tape Commission has unprecedented access to a wide range of very sensitive government and cabinet information.

Currently the co-chairs of this Red Tape Commission are Frank Sheehan, a private citizen, and Steve Gilchrist, the member of the Legislature who, after a very few

weeks in cabinet, was kicked out because apparently he could not meet the cabinet's ethics standard. That is whom we've got heading this commission.

I repeat: it's very clear that this Red Tape Commission has extraordinary access to a wide range of exceptionally sensitive and important cabinet information. The question remains. What, Minister, are the specific confidentiality and secrecy obligations that you and your government apply to the membership of this Red Tape Commission, and how specifically do you enforce—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Chair of Management Board.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I can only reiterate that this whole process is about getting rid of needless red tape. Red tape is a process; it's process-oriented. That's one of the reasons they're consulted, to make sure we don't in fact add additional red tape and provide stumbling blocks to economic development in this province.

I also beg to differ with the characterization of the member for Scarborough East, who certainly is a fine member who represents his area quite well. That's really an unfair characterization.

Red tape been something that was talked about prior to 1995. In the Common Sense Revolution, we committed to cutting red tape out of government. If I recall, back in 1995 in your particular political book, your member—when I went in to debate in 1995, he committed to get rid of half the red tape in this province. What the heck is that about? You either commit to getting rid of red tape or you don't. Another halfway Liberal measure: again, you can't commit one way or the other.

FARM DEER AND ELK

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. From my understanding, you've recently announced the healthy futures partnership program for deer and elk farmers. This will benefit monitoring the transfer of deer and elk between provinces. Constituents in my riding and members of this industry in Ontario are very interested in this project. Could you please explain to the members of this Legislature and my constituents what this project's all about?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Our government and the Canadian Cervid Council will share in the cost of putting in place an inventory for Ontario's farm deer and elk. This project also has a velvet tagging component to it, which would allow the industry to thoroughly address the issues around product quality. Healthy futures for Ontario agriculture will provide about 70% of the funding for this, in the amount of about \$128,000.

One of the reasons for doing this is that this will allow the deer and elk farmers to meet the demands of the market this year in the industry and to reap the dividends for tomorrow. It also means that Ontario's deer and elk farmers are on a more equal footing with producers elsewhere in Canada and this industry becomes more

self-reliant. This project will help the deer and elk farmers provide new guarantees of quality and safety through a trace-back system.

Mr Barrett: Being from a rural riding, Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, I do get inquiries regarding the lack of a provincial animal health act. Constituents have told me that other provinces have legislation that regulates the transfer of animals between provinces. I have a constituent who is very concerned about this issue. Could you please tell us what your ministry has done to address some of these concerns?

Hon Mr Coburn: We have put strong controls in place with regard to regulating the transfer of animals between provinces. For example, we have an active health surveillance program and an extensive technology transfer program. My ministry also works with the deer and elk industry and other levels of government, and with university partners and veterinary inspectors, to help ensure high standards of animal health. This helps in disease detection and effective disease control.

I can assure the member and our constituents that our current legislation, such as the Meat Inspection Act, the Milk Act and the Livestock Community Sales Act, is a key element in maintaining the highest level of quality and safety when it comes to transferring animals between provinces.

NORTHERN CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. For months, in fact years, we have been bringing you the stories of residents of northern Ontario who have no choice but to travel to get the health care they need. We have asked you to treat northerners fairly. We have asked you to end the discrimination that condones two different standards for the treatment of cancer patients in this province.

Last week, the auditor agreed that your policy is, and I quote, "inappropriately discriminatory," but when you were asked why you've delayed so long in changing this, you said it hadn't been an issue that long. Minister, you may not have been aware of this issue for long, but your government has known about it for years. Will you finally act to end the discrimination against northern cancer patients?

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Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): There's some confusion on this side of the House whether the honourable member said "auditor" or "Ombudsman." It was the Ombudsman who did report on Thursday, and the honourable member is aware of that.

I can tell the honourable member that I have directed the ministry of course to take the Ombudsman's conclusions very seriously. I have also directed the ministry to look at all travel grants throughout Ontario, northern Ontario, southern Ontario, cancer care travel grants for breast and prostate cancer, as well as travel grants for other health issues. Certainly the Ombudsman's conclusions and findings will be taken into consideration.

Mrs McLeod: I believe the review you've just described sounds exactly like the review that your government undertook of the northern health travel grant under your predecessor a year ago. I know the other thing you said last week was that you would not end your discrimination against northern cancer patients until you had a viable option. I would suggest to you that the only viable option to discrimination is to end the discrimination.

When the Ombudsman tried to get a copy of the review your predecessor initiated a full year ago, you embargoed it. It is only the second time in history that the Ombudsman has been refused access to a report in the course of an investigation. I suspect the reason that report was embargoed and not made available to the Ombudsman is that you have a viable option in front of you right now in that report that you want to bury. Will you release that report today so that we can all see what alternatives you're going to propose to end these years of discrimination?

Hon Mr Clement: I can assure the honourable member that the reason the documents she references are being embargoed is because they are cabinet documents, and in our system of parliamentary government, as she well knows, they are embargoed to the extent that cabinet is seized of the issues. Maybe that will change some day soon.

I can tell the honourable member that my position is the same as my predecessor's position. We want a fair travel grant scheme, a just travel grant scheme that is fair to everyone in the same degree in northern Ontario and southern Ontario. We will not rest until we have a viable plan that is fair and just to every citizen here in Ontario. The work on that continues. I wish I had a magic wand that could wave the situation away. In this case, it does take a little bit of time, and we're applying ourselves to it.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. Minister, there has been a lot of discussion about the growing health care costs here in Ontario and the future sustainability of the health care system. Although our government has increased health care spending from some \$17.4 billion in 1995 to \$23.5 billion this year, and that's far higher than our commitment back in the campaign of 1999, there are still critics who are concerned about the future of health care. With an aging and growing population, creating an increased demand on the health care system, there are sure to be problems in the future. Minister, what is Ontario's current position on health care financing?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Ontario is very concerned that we have top-quality, first-class health care for all of our citizens across the province. We have always considered health care to be a number one priority. Our Premier has been a

leader in securing health care funding for Ontario. At the first ministers' meeting last September, working with other provincial and territorial leaders, pressure was put on the federal government to increase their spending on health care. It was a welcome first step but not enough.

In fact, Ontario's share right now of the total health care spending has only been traditionally about 12%. It will go up to 13%, and that is a very far cry from its original agreement, to be part of a 50-50 arrangement. Right now, health care consumes 45% of Ontario's budget. That's \$745 per second on health care. We have been a leader in urging the federal government to be a health care partner and will continue to do—

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

Mr Galt: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I understand the federal Liberals have created a commission to address the future of the health care system on a national level. As Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, I'm sure you're encouraging Ottawa to assume a fair share of health care, something they certainly haven't been doing in the past. You would think, with the comments from the Liberals across the House, that maybe they'd speak to their federal cousins about doing something about fairness in health care.

However, given the pressing need to address increasing health care costs, how does Ontario intend to advance its concern about financing at a provincial level, in spite of the lack of support from the federal Liberals and the provincial Liberals?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I do hope my colleagues from across the way in the Liberal Party will begin to talk to their federal Liberal cousins about how to be equal partners here in Ontario. It's long overdue, not only in Ontario but across the country. In fact, the projections for health care spending are indicating that it will grow from \$56 billion to \$100 billion in 10 years, and that is clearly a tremendous pressure. My colleagues in the provincial-territorial council are going to—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take a seat. The member for Windsor West, come to order, please.

Minister?

Hon Mrs Elliott: A lot of noise but no action.

My colleagues on the provincial-territorial council are going to be making a presentation to the Premiers' conference this August. I know Premier Harris is going to continue to talk about health care, and I suspect, having spoken to my colleagues across the country, that health care will still continue to be a number one issue.

Mr Romanow has been appointed by Prime Minister Chrétien to discuss health care—

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

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. For some months I have been pointing out to you that your policy of

deregulation of electricity, privatization of electricity and higher electricity rates is going to lead to a loss of jobs in this province. This past weekend it struck home in the community of Kenora, where Abitibi-Consolidated has closed their paper mill. The company is very clear that it is the higher electricity rates that your government has presided over which are forcing them to close the mill.

This is only the beginning, Minister, because, as you know, you are receiving warning letters from companies in the mining industry, other companies in the pulp and paper industry, all of them pointing out to you that as you raise electricity rates, it creates incredible costs for them—costs which they can't sustain.

My question to you is this: how many jobs losses are you prepared to sustain as you go down the road of California and Alberta and privatize our electricity system and move into an American style of deregulated electricity prices? How many jobs are you prepared to sacrifice?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): As I've pointed out on countless occasions in this House, Abitibi-Consolidated is in favour of introducing competition in our electricity sector. They see it as a way of curing the sins of the past, sins that were not looked at by the honourable member in the past when he allowed, along with the Liberals, \$38 billion worth of debt to accumulate in the old Ontario Hydro. This government has a plan to control that debt, to eventually pay down that debt and to lead to the lowest possible prices for companies like Abitibi.

The honourable member is dubious in his facts when he fails to mention the labour unrest that they've had at Abitibi and numerous other problems, the least of which is the cost of power at this point.

Mr Hampton: The minister should talk to the manager of the Kenora mill who said the company has met with Ontario Power Generation seeking a way to restructure how the mill purchases electricity: "We are trying to find a solution to our power costs"—power costs that have gone up by 14% as a result of your government's move to sell off our electricity system.

I just want to remind you that yesterday the California independent market operator—you know, the independent market operator that you're copying here in Ontario—warned people across the state to expect at least two, possibly three days of blackouts and to be ready to deal with much higher electricity prices. As you move toward selling our publicly owned electricity system to international energy companies who are more interested in selling the power in the United States where they can get a much higher price, what's your answer to all those Ontario manufacturers, all those Ontario small businesses? How are you going to help them deal with electricity prices that are going to double, if not triple, once you integrate us into the American market?

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Hon Mr Wilson: First of all, I don't know what he's talking about. California does not have an independent electricity market operator. Secondly, we are not

California; we have an abundant supply in Ontario. What we have to do is deal with the sins of the past and deal with the debt and provide consumers with choice and provide them with the lowest possible costs in the electricity sector.

I wonder what the honourable member is going to say to the mills in his riding and to those up north that have been pounding on my door to, first of all, as quickly as possible open our market to competition so they can buy for themselves new generating plants, so they can generate their own electricity for the first time and not be subject to the rules of the monopoly of Ontario Hydro, which were very unfair to independent electricity producers in this province. What does he honestly say to the people in his riding who have been in my office here in Toronto, who have been begging me to open the market, including Abitibi-Consolidated, so they can get on and make their own energy arrangements and not have to pay these excessive prices that were brought to us by the monopoly?

SHELTER ALLOWANCES

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a question for the Deputy Premier. Back in the 1995 election, your party promised to introduce a shelter allowance program in the province of Ontario. You would be advised that the Housing Connections office here in the city of Toronto has begun to post a sign in their office, telling prospective applicants that they need not bother to apply—actually, that it will be a 10-year wait for them to be able to get into a housing unit once they have applied.

In your election document, you said that you would eliminate the two-year waiting lists. So my question is, when did you implement your shelter allowance program, and how well is it working in light of the fact that the Housing Connections office in the city of Toronto has now told prospective applicants that their wait will be a minimum of 10 years?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I am pleased to remind the member opposite that in the budget this year, a month ago, there was an important initiative that had been sought by those in the industry in the business of building affordable housing, and that was to provide a greater incentive for the development of new affordable rental housing. It was proposed in the budget, and the government intends to extend the time horizon of the new multi-residential property class from eight years to 35 years. It is an important initiative.

The honourable member opposite looks perplexed. If he's unfamiliar with it, it's important to understand what that means in terms of the ability to finance affordable housing over the long term. Eight years was the rule; the rule now should be 35 years, which will open up that market, particularly in a financing way, to increase affordable housing.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will create two-tier education;

“Whereas the government’s plan is to give parents a \$3,500 enticement to pull their kids out of public schools;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will encourage the growth of a segregated society of narrowly focused interests;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will steal money from an already cash-starved public system and deliver public money to special interests who do not have to account for its use;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools effectively create a voucher system in Ontario;

“Whereas the Harris government has no mandate to introduce such a measure,

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

“We call on the government of Ontario to withdraw its plan for two-tiered education and properly fund public education in Ontario.”

I sign my name to this petition and give it to Meera.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I’ve got thousands of names here of citizens opposed to the tax credit for private schools.

“Whereas the announced tax credit for private school tuition will lead to government funds being directed to private education rather than the underfunded public school system that is mandated to educate all children, regardless of cultural, religious or socio-economic status;

“Whereas the education tax credit of up to \$3,500 per child, when fully implemented, will lead to an increase of students being enrolled in private schools to the detriment of the public schools;

“Whereas there will be no accountability for the use of public funds allocated through the education tuition tax credit; and

“Whereas the advocates for religious schools have indicated they will continue to seek full funding for religious education with the potential result of more public funding being diverted to private schools;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Ontario Legislature to vote to remove the education tuition tax credit from Bill 45, the Ontario 2001 budget legislation.

I support this petition fully.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition from the community of Wawa, supported by hundreds of letters from Wawa youth, to the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources called for proposals with respect to surplus northeastern Ontario hardwood;

“Whereas Wawa Forest Products submitted a proposal for this surplus northeastern Ontario hardwood which included the building of a manufacturing facility in Wawa within the township of Michipicoten;

“Whereas on April 6, 2001, the Ministry of Natural Resources announced allocations of a portion of the surplus northeastern Ontario hardwood to Grant Forest Products in Timmins and Englehart, and Algoma Mill Works in Blind River;

“Whereas the residents of the township of Michipicoten believe that the proposal submitted by Wawa Forest Products is viable and will result in a desperately needed economic boost to the community and provide the industrial assessment needed for the continued viability of the community;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Natural Resources arrange a meeting between officials of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Wawa Forest Products and the township of Michipicoten. The reason for such a meeting is to coordinate a consensus on minor differences that may exist in the plan submitted by Wawa Forest Products. It is the hope of the township of Michipicoten and its residents that such a meeting would result in the construction of the Wawa Forest Products mill in Wawa.”

I agree with this petition, and I affix my signature.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I’ve got a standing-up-for-public-education petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will create two-tier education;

“Whereas the government’s plan is to give parents a \$3,500 enticement to pull their kids out of public schools;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will encourage the growth of a segregated society of narrowly focused interests;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will steal money from an already cash-starved public system and deliver public money to special interests who do not have to account for its use;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools effectively create a voucher system in Ontario;

“Whereas the Harris government has no mandate to introduce such a measure,

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

“We call on the government of Ontario to withdraw its plan for two-tiered education and properly fund public education.”

It’s signed by thousands of signatories and by myself.

ELECTRICITY GENERATING STATION

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I'm very happy to present this petition on behalf of my constituents in Mississauga South and the constituents of the member for Oakville, Garry Carr, who, as Speaker, is not able to present petitions in the House. It's to the Parliament of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Sithe Energies Canadian Development Ltd is actively pursuing the development of an 800 MW electricity generating facility;

"Whereas the 14-hectare parcel of land on which the station is proposed is located on the east side of Winston Churchill Boulevard in the Southdown industrial district of Mississauga;

"Whereas Sithe has stated its commitment to an open dialogue with communities where it has a presence and to being responsive to the concerns of the same; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has a responsibility to ensure the safety of Ontario citizens and to determine how this facility will impact those who live in its immediate, surrounding area,

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

"That the government of Ontario direct the Ministry of the Environment to undertake a formal environmental assessment of the Sithe project."

I am very happy to add my name to this petition.

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NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have more petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel

grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their own communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

PERSONAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have further petitions from the Hamilton second level lodging home tenants committee, and I would point out that these petitions are signed not just by Hamiltonians but by people from Fort Erie, Ottawa, Cobourg and other areas. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas individuals who are tenants and residents in facilities such as care homes, nursing homes or domiciliary hostels under certain acts are provided with a personal needs allowance to meet incidental costs other than those provided by the facility; and

"Whereas the personal needs allowance has been fixed by the Ontario government at a rate of \$112 for nearly a decade and has not kept pace with cost-of-living increases, and furthermore is inadequate to meet incidental costs such as clothing, hygiene products and essentials;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately review and amend provincial legislation to increase the personal needs allowance from \$112 a month to \$160 a month for individuals living in care homes, nursing homes or other domiciliary hostels."

I add my name to this petition as I am in support of it.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas wide parental and student choice are essential to the best possible education for all students; and

"Whereas many people believe that an education with a strong faith component, be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or another religion, is best for their children; and

"Whereas many people believe that special education methodologies such as those practised in the Montessori and Waldorf schools are best for their children; and

"Whereas over 100,000 students are currently enrolled in the independent schools of Ontario; and

"Whereas the parents of these students continue to support the public education system through their tax dollars; and

"Whereas an effective way to enhance the education of those students is to allow an education tax credit for a portion of the tuition fees paid for that education;

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

“To pass the budget bill giving tax credits to parents of children who attend independent schools as soon as possible.”

Mrs Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will create two-tier education;

“Whereas the government plans to give parents a \$3,500 enticement to pull their kids out of public schools;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will encourage the growth of a segregated society of narrowly focused interests;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will steal money from an already cash-starved public system and deliver public money to special interests who do not have to account for its use;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools effectively create a voucher system in Ontario;

“Whereas the Harris government has no mandate to introduce such a measure,

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

“We call on the government of Ontario to withdraw its plan for two-tiered education and properly fund public education in Ontario.”

It's a pleasure for me to assign my signature.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition here signed by a number of people. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will create two-tier education;

“Whereas the government's plan is to give parents a \$3,500 enticement to pull their kids out of public schools;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will encourage the growth of a segregated society of narrowly focused interests;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will steal money from an already cash-starved public system and deliver public money to special interests who do not have to account for its use;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools effectively create a voucher system in Ontario;

“Whereas the Harris government has no mandate to introduce such a measure,

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

“We call on the government of Ontario to withdraw its plan for two-tiered education and properly fund public education in Ontario.”

I sign that petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I have a petition 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, Ontario.”

I'm pleased to add my signature to this petition.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got another petition from many citizens from Barrie, Cobourg, Halton, Hamilton, Kenora, Kitchener, Waterloo, London, Mississauga, Oshawa, Owen Sound, Peterborough, all over Ontario, citizens who are opposed to the tax credit for private schools.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will create two-tier education;

“Whereas the government's plan is to give parents a \$3,500 enticement to pull their kids out of public schools;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will encourage the growth of a segregated society of narrowly focused interests;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will steal money from an already cash-starved public system and deliver public money to special interests who do not have to account for its use;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools effectively create a voucher system in Ontario;

“Whereas the Harris government has no mandate to introduce such a measure,

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

“We call on the government of Ontario to withdraw its plan for two-tiered education and properly fund public education in Ontario.”

I support this petition very strongly, Speaker. I'll sign my name to it.

WATER EXTRACTION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas we, the residents and cottagers of Bob’s Lake, strenuously object to the permit issued by the Ministry of the Environment to OMYA Inc to remove 1.5 million litres of water per day from the Tay River without adequate assessment of the consequences and without adequate consultation with the public and those people and groups who have expertise and interest; and

“Whereas it is our belief that this water taking will drastically impact the environment and seriously affect the water levels in Bob’s and Christie lakes. This in turn would affect fish spawning beds as well as habitat. It would also affect the wildlife in and around the lakes;

“Whereas Bob’s Lake and the Tay River watershed are already highly stressed by the historic responsibility of Parks Canada to use Bob’s Lake as a reservoir for the Rideau Canal; and

“Whereas the movement of water from the lake through the watershed for navigation purposes in the canal provides sufficient stress and problems for the lake. This water taking permit will only compound the stresses on the waterway;

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

“We request that this permit be rescinded until a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of water taking by OMYA Inc on the environment, the water levels and the water needs of these communities is complete. An independent non-partisan body should undertake this evaluation.”

This is signed by a number of residents, and I have added my signature to it as well.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE SERVICES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2001 / LOI DE 2001 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES SERVICES D’AMBULANCE

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 12, 2001, on the motion for second reading of Bill 58, An Act to ensure the provision of essential ambulance services in the event of a strike or lock-out of ambulance workers / Projet de loi 58, Loi visant à assurer la fourniture des services d’ambulance essentiels dans l’éventualité d’une grève ou d’un lock-out de préposés aux services d’ambulance.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 13, 2001, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Stockwell has moved second reading of Bill 58, An Act to ensure the provision of essential ambulance services in the event of a strike or lock-out of ambulance workers. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1521 to 1526.

The Speaker: Would the members kindly take their seats.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hastings, John	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dunlop, Garfield	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Ecker, Janet	Miller, Norm	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David

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

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Bisson, Gilles	Crozier, Bruce	Levac, David
Boyer, Claudette	Curling, Alvin	Marchese, Rosario
Bradley, James J.	Di Cocco, Caroline	McLeod, Lyn
Brown, Michael A.	Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted
Bryant, Michael	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie
Caplan, David	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Christopherson, David	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kormos, Peter	Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 39; the nays are 30.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House, the bill is referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

MPP COMPENSATION REFORM ACT (ARM’S LENGTH PROCESS), 2001 LOI DE 2001 PORTANT RÉFORME DE LA RÉTRIBUTION DES DÉPUTÉS (PROCESSUS SANS LIEN DE DÉPENDANCE)

Mr Tsubouchi moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to provide an arm’s length process to determine members’ compensation / Projet de loi 82, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’Assemblée législative pour établir un processus sans lien de dépendance permettant de fixer la rétribution des députés.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I’m rising today to begin second reading debate on Bill 82, An Act to amend the

Legislative Assembly Act to provide an arm's length process to determine members' compensation.

The proposed legislation would ensure that future compensation given to members of provincial Parliament would be determined by Ontario's Integrity Commissioner. This law, if passed, would ensure that the salaries for members of provincial Parliament would be set by an impartial third party, not by elected politicians.

This legislation proposes that the Integrity Commissioner review compensation paid to members at intervals he or she deems appropriate. Any review or proposed change to members' compensation would be public and transparent. If the Integrity Commissioner determines that a review should be done, then he or she would prepare a report outlining compensation changes. The report would be submitted to the Speaker of the Ontario Legislature, who would then table it in the Assembly and publish it in the Gazette. This process is fair to members of provincial Parliament. More importantly, this process is fair to Ontario taxpayers.

I would like to remind the House that in 1996 our government reformed MPPs' compensation, eliminated tax-free allowances, got rid of the gold-plated pension plan, at the same time cutting the average pay of politicians by 5%. Furthermore, as promised in the Common Sense Revolution, our government cut the number of politicians at Queen's Park from 130 to 103, the first cut of its kind since 1933. Our government also cut the cost of government administration by 35%, saving taxpayers \$300 million a year.

Legislating members' compensation to an impartial third party is another example of how our government will continue to maintain our accountability to Ontario's taxpayers.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Questions and comments?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I just want to point out a few things that perhaps the minister responsible for Management Board could allude to. We've done a calculation of MPPs' salaries in 1995 and maybe the minister responsible can confirm or deny this. In 1995, MPPs were paid \$42,000 a year and had a \$14,000-a-year tax-free expense allowance. If you gross up the tax-free expense allowance, it grosses up to approximately \$21,000 a year, so \$42,000 plus the \$21,000 grossed up equal \$63,000. I just heard the minister responsible for Management Board say that you cut salaries, but by any calculation, when you gross up the tax-free allowance, they went from \$63,000 a year to \$78,000 a year. I wonder how you can call going from \$63,000 a year to \$78,000 a year in 1996 a reduction in pay.

The cabinet minister also referred to the fact that you reduced the number of MPPs. I want to point out that soon after that the government House leader had to acknowledge that, yes, having reduced the number of MPPs, you then had to increase the constituency allotment for each MPP because fewer MPPs would be handling more constituency work, more case work. In

fact, I remember the government House leader saying there were no net savings in that. So I wonder if the minister responsible for Management Board can explain those anomalies, the differences in what he just said and what appear to be the figures.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I want to thank the Chair of Management Board for his comments.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I want to comment and remind the House and the minister who just spoke about the plight of minimum wage earners in this province. I want to remind them that more than half of them are aged 15 to 24 years old; six out of 10 minimum wage earners work part-time; and they make only \$6.85 an hour, right here in Ontario. We've enjoyed really good economic times and the government takes all the credit for that. We know, of course, that the good economy is a result of the good economy in the United States, and we are watching right now, as the economy is going in the dumps there, the impact that's starting to have here.

Leaving that aside, whoever is responsible for the dips and dives in the economy, the reality is that we've been in a very good economy here in Ontario for the past several years, and the government has not seen fit during that time to raise the wages of the lowest-paid workers in Ontario. Everywhere I go—it happened just recently on the weekend. I was visiting co-op housing for recovering alcoholics and people who abuse drugs, who were talking to me about the minimum wage and how people cannot get by on that any longer.

I have a real problem when we're here talking about the fact that we are going to raise our wages, when here we are living in good economic times and the government after all these years, coming to power in 1995, has not seen fit to raise the wage of minimum wage earners. I would very much like to use this opportunity for the government to make an announcement that it will raise the amount the minimum wage worker makes in this province.

Hon David Turnbull (Solicitor General): I want to thank my colleague. I think this is a step in the right direction. It always has been in my mind an obscenity that politicians set their own pay. It is appropriate that it be handled by an outside authority and that we should not have a hand in this. So I think this is certainly a step forward that all fair-minded people in Ontario would agree would be appropriate.

The Speaker: Response?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: To the member for Kenora-Rainy River, just a simple calculation answer: when the salaries were then chosen to become transparent, that took into account the abolition of the gold-plated pension plan, which we no longer have.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I rise today to speak to Bill 82, an act that will provide a process for determining MPPs' salaries. Since I came to this Legislature in 1987, I have been struck by the absurdity, and frankly the great conflict of interest, of setting our own salaries. This is the issue that I think

defines conflict of interest. Nothing could be a greater conflict of interest than determining—

The Speaker: Order. If you want to take your debate outside, you can do that. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has the floor. Sorry for the interruption.

Mr Brown: There could be no greater conflict of interest than trying to set or actually setting one's own salary and spending public money in order that we are paid. That is the conflict of interest.

I recall that back in 1987 there was a salary increase in this province for members of the Legislature, of what was then cost of living. I remember in 1988 that also happened, and in 1989 it happened again, supported by all three parties, supported by all members of the Legislature insofar as I can recall. As a matter of fact, I think they all passed on voice votes. I then recall that in 1993, the next time the issue was addressed, our salaries were rolled back 5% by the social contract, and then in 1996 the new grossed up pay system was put in place.

All those were awkward events. They are very difficult for us to deal with credibly. I think all of us understand that. That means that in over 14 years this issue has been addressed in this Legislature five times. I think by any stretch of the imagination that is an inadequate system.

I like what the government is saying on this occasion, the occasion that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner—because that's what he was formerly known as—but the Integrity Commissioner started out in this Legislature in about the same time frame, 1987 or 1988. I can't quite recall the exact year. He was the one we, as members of this Legislature, trusted to declare all our assets to, all our sources of income, all our spouses' or partners' sources of income, all our minor children's sources of income. Everything we owned or any income we might obtain was declared to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, now the Integrity Commissioner.

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This is the person we trust to look after the integrity of the province of Ontario. That seems to me to be the appropriate place for decisions on our salary to be made. It seems to me that the Integrity Commissioner has the moral authority in this province to deal with this issue as he does with every other issue regarding members' assets and liabilities and even their spouses' and minor children's assets and liabilities. He is here to protect us. While I'm uncomfortable with discussing this at all, let this be the last time we need to do that in this place.

I just want to bring to members' attention a quote I would like to read from the debate of January 1988. This is the Leader of the Opposition, the honourable Robert K. Rae. He said:

"We are subject to an extraordinary degree of public scrutiny as members of a profession that deals with the public and for whom publicity is a way of life for us. The question is raised on many occasions, whenever salaries are raised, that it is not the right time. People say this is not the right year. Let me tell you, Mr Speaker, there is never a right year to deal with this question. It is always

going to be one which will raise eyebrows and obviously one which will raise concerns from a public which in many cases does not have the highest opinion of those of us who are in elected office.

"I want to make it very clear that I do not have any figure in my head that is an ideal figure for what a member should be paid, or for what a cabinet minister should be paid, or for what the Leader of the Opposition or the leader of the third party should be paid.

"What I want to say to this House is ... I do not think it is right that we should be put in the position every year of having to determine our own salaries. It is inappropriate," Mr Rae said. "It puts us in an invidious position, and I think it is wrong."

Further in the Hansard he goes on to say, "Let the commission determine what the rate should be and let that be the end of it. I hope we never have to have another debate in this place or in any other place in terms of what our salaries should be." That is the position I take.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to add just a couple of things to the record. I guess the problem I as a New Democrat am having with this whole debate is that it's not a question of, "Are members valued for what they do? Should members make more money? Should we have an independent process?" I understand all those arguments. The difficulty I'm having is simply this: we've lived in an economy where over the last number of years we've seen, as my good friend from Toronto-Danforth pointed out, minimum wage workers who have not had an increase since the time we gave an increase in 1994 under the Bob Rae government. We've been calling on this provincial government to give minimum wage workers an increase to at least the level that American workers got at the time we introduced our legislation some couple of years ago under the leadership of Howard Hampton.

For the last 10 years, as a government member and as an opposition member of this assembly, I have had to watch what governments, both mine and others, have done when it came to going into the public sector and saying, "You should tighten your belt." We need to make sure we aren't excessive in our demands, so we're able to properly manage the affairs of the province of Ontario when it comes to the ability to pay.

I have difficulty trying to say to minimum wage workers by way of the provincial government that they are not going to be getting an increase. Those workers who have worked in the public sector for the last 10 years have had minimal increases of 1% or 2% per year, and on top of that we have workers in the private sector who are being hammered every day when they try to bargain their collective agreements and are told they are greedy if they're asking for more than 1%, 2% or 3%. How could it be that we as members of this assembly can allow ourselves to be judged a different way?

I say, do members deserve what they get? Yes. Should there be an independent process? Yes. To me, the ques-

tion is simply this: is it fair as compared to what happened to other workers out there? I think the answer is clearly no. For that reason, I don't support this legislation at this time, because of what's happening out there in the reality of the world.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): In response to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, who I think set out very clearly what the purpose of this legislation is, those of us on this side of the House will be supporting the bill simply because it does take out of the hands of members of this Legislature the decision about what we should be paid. I think it's unfair to place us in that position to make that decision. So for an independent individual, highly regarded, highly respected in this province, to have the responsibility to set that is appropriate.

I would also for the record point out the reference that was made to minimum wage in this province. During the 1990s, according to the Ministry of Labour, the minimum wage increased some 34%. That's not to say that it necessarily is where it should be, and that may well be an issue for debate. But let me clarify that during the 1990s, the minimum wage increased by 34% in this province. I think people should know that.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I agree with many of the comments that have been made by my colleagues within the New Democratic Party, except for one thing. The question that I have of them is, are they going to take the raise or not, if there is to be a raise? That's the issue, because certainly their colleagues in the federal House took the position, they voted against it, and then they took the raise.

Let me just very quickly talk about this bill. I like the process, but I hope the commissioner at least will take into account—and I realize that there should be as little instruction to him as possible—the possibility that whatever increase he's going to implement, we will implement it after the next election. This is the way a lot of councils do it, a lot of the local governments—not every government—so that if people have something to say about it, if they feel it is an election issue, they can do so in the next election. That's the fairest way to do it.

Yes, there are many other arguments that can be made as to why other people aren't making more money and why the minimum wage shouldn't be increased, and I agree with all those arguments. I don't think we're hard done by in this place. I still think that even with what we're getting right now, we're in the top 2% or 3% of the wage earners of this province. I quite frankly don't care what the federal people make. If they make twice as much as we do, or half of what we do, who cares? I ran for this job; they ran for that job.

On the other hand, the average person out on the street already thinks we've got a raise and that we still have a gold-plated pension plan. That's the perception the average person has. So I say let's get on with it, let's not play politics with it, and let's hope that whatever the Integrity Commissioner comes back with will be implemented after the next election.

The Speaker: Further questions or comments?

Ms Churley: The words quoted from—

Mr Gerretsen: Are you going to take it?

Ms Churley: Absolutely. Do you think I'm going to take any less money than you or you across the floor?

Let me tell you something. I have a copy of the Common Sense Revolution—remember that?—when Mike Harris, who was then running as the leader of the Tory caucus, undervalued and demeaned politicians every step of the way, even bragged in his Common Sense Revolution about taking away the sweet deals that politicians have for themselves etc.

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Then they attempted to give a raise to all politicians when they realized they had made all their own politicians angry. They attempted to do it, and then the fallout came and they backed off. They didn't have the guts or the courage to do it themselves, and so they let it sit for a while. They begged and pleaded and tried to find an agreement with all parties in this House and couldn't find it. Then what did they do? Let me tell you, I support the notion, under other circumstances, of having an independent body make this decision. But we know very well what the circumstances are here. Let's not pretend: we're human beings, and every human being would like a pay raise, for heaven's sake, if it's offered. Let's get real. We're human beings; we're people. That's the reality. But what they did, and what you're agreeing to here, is to go along with a backdoor process. If they had the guts to give the raise, which is what they tried to do last year and backed down, they would just do it.

You Liberals know as well as I do what is really going on here. It's crass and underhanded, and that's why I don't support it.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Brown: I want to thank the members for their comments. I understand there are other major issues before this province. This is perhaps not a priority, and this is a good reason to have it out of this place. It is a good reason to depoliticize this place so we can get on with the important work of the people of Ontario.

Mr Speaker, you will understand, and I think all members on all sides of the House understand, that this is an important, significant work/job/position we have. This work we do on behalf of the people of Ontario is taken very sincerely by members of all three political parties. We work hard. None of us—at least I can't think of a member who sought this job because of the salary or perks it might have. As a matter of fact, when I ran, I had no idea what the salary might be. I just presumed the people of Ontario would want us to be treated fairly. The problem, of course, is how you decide your own salary. How is that fair in any way?

I have the utmost confidence in the Integrity Commissioner. Whether he proposes an increase or a decrease, I'm sure it will be acceptable to all members of the Legislature. I ask members not to use this debate to demean our position here. Remember, whether we're on the

government side or the opposition side, we're here to do the people's work.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There are times when 10 seconds can make a lot of difference. It just happens that on the vote on Bill 58 we were cut 10 seconds short. The doors were closed, and me and a couple of other members couldn't access the chamber to vote. I think we should be allowed the full time, so we can run from our offices down here and vote. Unfortunately, there were still 10 seconds left and the doors were closed. I think we should be allowed the full time.

The Speaker: I was here, and the clock counts down. We have our own clock here that we see. I know some members cut it very close. In fact, I've seen people dive through the door and barely make it. It's a wonder we haven't lost some parts. But on this one, the clock counted down. We will check and make sure, but as far as the clock in here, we waited, and I make very clear when we get down to zero—the clock should be correct, unless there's something wrong with it, which I don't think there is. We will check that, though.

Further debate?

Mr Hampton: I look forward to taking part in this debate, because there is a historical element to this, a constitutional element to this and, I must say, I think there is a fairness element to this. I want to use the time allotted to me to outline all those aspects. Let me say that I think people across Ontario would probably appreciate all those aspects of this debate.

Let's be very clear about what's going on here. The government wants to enact legislation which, if you read the legislation and you read the boundaries of the legislation, will entitle MPPs to a considerable pay raise. That's what's going on here. The government, over the last two years, has tried on three occasions to bring forward substantial increases in MPPs' pay. Each time, they have backed away from it because they simply didn't have the political courage to do it. They recognized that they had some problems, some historical problems. I want to first speak about those historical problems.

I remember the period 1993, 1994, 1995, when Mike Harris was the leader of the third party, leader of the Conservative caucus, and I remember him going across the province and saying that members of the Legislature had gold-plated pension plans, so gold-plated that MPPs were grossly overpaid. That was the position of the then leader of the Conservative Party—now Premier of Ontario—that MPPs were grossly overpaid. I think I'm probably understating it, probably understating it by quite a lot, in terms of just using that volume and that repetition, because it was repeated everywhere by members of the Conservative Party, by the leader of the Conservative caucus, Mike Harris, for over two years.

After saying that MPPs were grossly overpaid, the now Premier of Ontario, six years later, has been trying to find a way to increase pay by 32%, even 42%—in six years—a total flip-flop in positions. That's a bit of

history about this, and it's a bit of history about the statements of members of the Conservative caucus before and members of the Conservative caucus now.

That's the scenario. The government wants a 32%, a 42%, a 52%, maybe even a 70% increase, but they don't want the political accountability that comes along with it. If you remember the throne speech this year, I think the word "accountability" was repeated at least four times every page of the throne speech.

Now, accountability means that you are held accountable for your actions. You are held accountable for the minimum wage if it's increased or if there's a failure to increase it. You are held accountable if nurses are paid so low in Ontario that they begin to leave Ontario for other jurisdictions. You are held accountable for all of those issues in the broader public sector.

But here we have a government that is, frankly, trying to escape accountability. You see, after saying in 1993, 1994 and 1995 that MPPs are grossly overpaid because they have gold-plated pensions, it becomes a bit difficult for the government to now suddenly say, "Oh, but after only six years, the pay has to be increased by 30% or 40% or 50%," and to say that to minimum wage workers who have had their wages frozen now in Ontario for six and a half years. For six and a half years, the minimum wage has been frozen at \$6.85 an hour. Based on a 40-hour week, that will barely give you an income of \$14,000 a year.

Social assistance rates were first cut 22% and have now been frozen for six and a half years. People in the broader public sector in this province, whether firefighters or nurses or teachers or child care workers or municipal workers, have been told over and over again since 1995 that they are limited to pay increases of 2% or less every year.

The government wants to find a way to dissociate itself from the rhetoric, the godawful rhetoric, it used in 1993, 1994 and 1995 to say that MPPs were overpaid. It wants to find a way to dissociate itself from that, and then it wants to find a way also to dissociate itself from the rules that apply to virtually all the other workers in the province, certainly those who work in the broader public sector—education, health, municipal—and to dissociate itself from the lowest-paid workers in the province, who have had their wages frozen for six and a half years. The government wants one rule for all those people, but it wants an entirely different rule for MPPs. That's what's really going on here.

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There have been three other attempts by this government to increase MPPs' salaries, by 32%, 40% or 42%. They backed away from each of those because at the end of the day they recognized the hypocrisy of freezing the minimum wage for six and a half years but then voting MPPs a 30% pay increase, the hypocrisy of telling everyone else out there, nurses, teachers, child care workers, municipal workers, "You're limited to 2% or less a year," but then turning and voting a 30% or a

40% pay increase for themselves. They recognized the hypocrisy and they backed away from it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That's one word I'll ask you to refrain from using.

Mr Hampton: I will refrain from using that term, Speaker.

That's a bit of the background. I can cite the report of the Speaker's Commission on Members' Compensation, which was issued last June 14, a year ago. The government commissioned the Speaker to set up a commission, and the commission came forward then with a recommendation for a 32% pay increase, but the government, recognizing that as government they would have to vote yea or nay, decided, "We don't want to be held accountable for this," so they said no.

This is all about escaping accountability. That's what this bill is all about: escaping accountability. A government that uses those terms over and over again, when it comes to its own pay, wants to escape accountability. They want to be able to say, "Oh, the devil made me do it."

Let's be perfectly clear here: this is government saying they want a pay increase. I take it now this is Liberal members saying they want a substantial pay increase. But they want to avoid the political accountability that comes with it.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): You're the one doing that.

Mr Hampton: I say to the Liberal member that he will get a chance to speak if he wants to speak.

The Acting Speaker: Would the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale come to order.

Mr Hampton: I want to refer to what I think is inherent in the process the government has set up. What I think is inherent is identified in the report of the Speaker's commission that was issued last June 14. This is the commission that calls for a 32% pay increase. What I note in this commission is that nowhere does it compare the wage and salary structure of MPPs here in Ontario with the wage and salary structure of other MPPs across Canada: in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Newfoundland. Don't you find it passing strange that the government would put together a comparative process but then doesn't compare you to anyone you would think you should naturally be compared to, members of the Legislature in other provinces?

I suspect that comparison didn't happen because it wouldn't have led to the result the government wanted. The comparison the Speaker's commission used was in fact to people who are not legislators, to people who are out there in some other line of work, people who are not involved, in many cases, in public sector work, are not elected members of a Legislature, are not elected bodies, but certainly wouldn't compare them to MPPs.

I suggest that most of us would say that should be the automatic comparison. The automatic comparison should be, "What are your peers making in other provinces? What are your peers making in Quebec, the province

immediately next door? What are your peers making in Alberta, the province which has, as its government likes to boast, a growing economy, which has adopted similar policies to this government? What do MLAs receive, for example, in British Columbia, which has the next-largest economy after Quebec and Ontario?" None of those things were compared. They were absent. Let me suggest to you why they were absent, and I think this will tell us why this is really a process aimed at getting a pay increase no matter what the evidence indicates.

What does a member of the Legislature receive in British Columbia? A member of the Legislature in British Columbia has a pay of \$71,000 a year. In Ontario it's \$78,000 a year.

What does a member of the Legislature in Alberta receive? They receive \$39,720 in pay and \$19,860 in expense allowance, so if you gross that up, add about another \$9,000, it still doesn't get you to \$78,000.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: I noticed many of the Liberal members here didn't get on their feet to speak, but they want to say something now. I'd just say, if you have something to say, get on your feet and participate in the debate.

A Quebec member of the Legislature has a pay of \$71,000 and an expense allowance of \$12,000, not much different from where MPPs are here.

We can go down the list. Prince Edward Island: salary, \$33,000; expense allowance, \$10,000. Nova Scotia: \$31,965; expense allowance, \$15,000. New Brunswick: \$38,000; expense allowance, \$18,000. Newfoundland: pay of \$40,000; expense allowance, \$20,000. Manitoba: pay of \$61,000; no expense allowance. Saskatchewan: \$58,000; \$4,781 expense allowance. These figures are salaries and allowances for provincial legislators in the year 2000, so I would assume they are accurate to within the last four or five months.

So the process that was used last spring by the Speaker's commission, I would suggest to you, was not a fair comparative process. It was a process that was very, very selective. By leaving out the members of other Legislatures, of Quebec, Manitoba, British Columbia, Alberta, I think it indicates to all of us what an unfair process, what a selective process, it was.

That's a bit of how we got here. That's a bit of the historical and institutional history about how we got here.

Now the government brings forward this legislation, and I want people at home to understand exactly how it would work. What it would do is this: the government would avoid accountability. By passing this legislation, the government would be able to say, "You, the nurse, will get a pay increase of 2% or less this year. You, the teacher, will get a pay increase of 2% or less this year. You, the municipal worker, will get a pay increase of 2% or less this year, as will the librarian, the child care worker, those people who work for the associations for community living. You'll get a pay increase of 2% or less this year, and the Legislature of Ontario, the Conservative government of Ontario, will make certain that your

pay increase is limited”—and they will be accountable on that part.

There will be debate in the Legislature and there will be bills and there will be votes, but when it comes to MPPs' pay increases, if this legislation passes, there will be no such accountability—none. There won't even be a vote in the Legislature any more. This whole matter will be turned over to someone who is not accountable to the citizens of Ontario, who is not elected by the citizens of Ontario, does not have to account in any way to constituents or to the broad public of Ontario. It will be turned over to someone who can, with a stroke of a pen, avoid all that accountability. That's what this is about.

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To give people a sense of how unprecedented this is—and I think people at home need to reflect on how unprecedented this is—is this the process in British Columbia? No. Is this the process in Alberta? No. Is this the process in Saskatchewan? No. In Manitoba? No. In Quebec? No. In New Brunswick? No. Newfoundland? No. Prince Edward Island? No. In virtually every other province in the country, elected members agree to be held accountable on whatever salaries or benefits they vote for themselves. They believe in that level of accountability. But here in Ontario, this is a statement of the government that it doesn't believe in that kind of accountability. It doesn't believe that at the end of the day members of the Legislature should be held accountable for what salary increases and what benefit increases they have, in effect, arranged for themselves. That's what this is: it is an arrangement.

All you have to do is look at the Speaker's commission of last spring and that becomes very clear. When the so-called commission doesn't even compare MPPs' salaries in Ontario with the salaries of other legislative members or members of the Quebec National Assembly, I think you have to say to yourself there's something amiss here; there is something clearly amiss. But that is the strategy. The government wants to avoid that accountability, and they are going to do something which is almost totally unprecedented.

Even the British parliamentary system, the British House of Commons, does not use this kind of system. Yes, they have an independent commissioner there who is entitled to make recommendations, entitled to make comparisons and then follow on with recommendations, but it is not an automatic process that then escapes the scrutiny of the Legislature. It's not an automatic process. There, at the end of the day, members of the Legislature have to vote and have to follow on in terms of whether or not they take the so-called increase.

But here in Ontario the government wants to set up a completely unaccountable system when it comes to their own pay. One has to wonder and one has to ask, what happened to this government's respect for the taxpayer? This is the government that has said over and over again that it shows respect for the taxpayer. There is no respect for the taxpayer in this process. In fact, if anything, there is disrespect for the taxpayer. There is an attempt to elude

the taxpayer. There is an attempt to find a way to finesse oneself by the taxpayer, to avoid the taxpayer, to somehow say that the salaries and wages of MPPs should not be subject to taxpayer scrutiny.

If I follow the rhetoric of this government, they have said over and over again that members of the Legislature are here to scrutinize on behalf of the taxpayer, to be the yellow light, the red light on behalf of the taxpayer and to raise these issues when someone is trying to elude the spotlight of the taxpayer. But here we have a strategy that from day one is designed to avoid the scrutiny of the taxpayer, is designed to ensure that the taxpayer cannot hold them accountable, that the taxpayer cannot say, “As my MPP, what were you doing when you OK'd this? How do you justify this?”

That's what this is. I think that's why as more and more people come to understand it they will find it so offensive, that despite all this government's rhetoric about being here on behalf of the taxpayer, about respecting the taxpayer, about ensuring that those hard-working men and women across Ontario receive accountability for their taxes, despite all that rhetoric, this is a strategy, a scheme, to avoid taxpayer accountability, a strategy, a scheme, to show disrespect for those taxpayers.

I invite people at home to actually have a look at this bill, because I just want to show how unprecedented this is. It is a basic principle, not just here in Ontario but throughout the whole British parliamentary system—and we are all receptors of the British parliamentary system—of responsible government that money bills, bills which impose a tax or specifically direct the allocation of public money, of taxpayers' dollars, can't even be introduced by anyone except ministers of the crown. So a member of the Legislature over here couldn't even introduce an expenditure bill. We couldn't even introduce something that would result in public expenditure. It is part of the constitutional framework of the British parliamentary system, of Canada, of the provinces, that the only people who can do that are the cabinet ministers of the government.

Yet when it comes to their own pay increases, they want to now avoid the Constitution, avoid all the conventions of the British parliamentary system and shuffle that off to someone else. That's what's really going on here. No one else in this Legislature, not even a government backbencher, could introduce a bill or a measure or a plan which requires the expenditure of taxpayers' dollars. The only people who can do that are government cabinet ministers. But this government now wants to shove that off. When it comes to their own pay increases, they now want to shove that off into a back room. They want to avoid the scrutiny of the taxpayers. They want to avoid the scrutiny of our own Constitution, of the conventions of our own system of responsible government.

As I say, this is a basic constitutional convention of responsible and parliamentary government, and it is well recognized throughout Canada and it's recognized in innumerable judicial decisions. The preamble of the

British North America Act of 1867, now the Constitution Act, the words highlighted in the preamble are well recognized as importing all of these conventions into Canada and into our provincial Legislatures. But this government now proposes, when it comes to their own pay increases, to avoid that, to even change that constitutional convention.

Currently, pay for the members of the Legislature is set out in the Legislative Assembly Act. In the past when the government of the day decided to increase MPPs' pay or to change the system of compensation, it had to introduce an amendment to the Legislative Assembly Act, and that process respects the principles of responsible government, that the crown, the government of the day, must accept the responsibility for the allocation of public dollars, for the allocation of taxpayers' money. But this government doesn't want to take that responsibility. They want to avoid that accountability. That's what's going on here: an avoidance of accountability.

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What will happen if this legislation passes? I have to tell the government that, as members of the New Democratic Party caucus, we will do everything we can to insist on lengthy debate on this legislation so that the public of Ontario, the taxpayers of Ontario, understand what is really happening here. We're going to insist on lengthy debate, and we believe this should be subject to public hearings. If the government of Ontario, with the help of the Liberal caucus, is going to now strike out one of the fundamental principles of the constitutions of British parliamentary systems of government, then we think there ought to be public hearings. We think that before such a fundamental step is made, there ought to be public hearings so people across Ontario can fully understand what is happening and people across Ontario can have a say in what is happening.

Again, so people will clearly understand, what the government has in mind now is that instead of having taxpayer accountability, instead of forcing MPPs to say, "Yes, we believe we need a pay increase. We're due a pay increase"—none of that will happen—what will happen is this will all go to a backroom where someone who is unelected, and you may not even know who they are or where they come from, will with the stroke of a pen decide what the pay increase shall be. There will be no debate. There will be no public hearings. There will be no opportunity to question. It will simply be the stroke of a pen and that becomes law automatically.

But just contrast this. I've introduced two private members' bills now to have the minimum wage increased. After having seen the minimum wage frozen for six and a half years, I think there ought to be a debate about increasing the minimum wage. The government won't even allow those measures to come to a debate. I've asked for unanimous consent. I've suggested the government should introduce their own legislation. The government will not even let that issue come to a debate. That's a year-long process. A year-long process cannot get the minimum wage increased, yet the government's

position is that MPPs' salaries, the Premier's salary, cabinet ministers' salaries should be increased behind closed doors at the stroke of a pen, with absolutely no public debate, no public discussion whatsoever. I think you see the incredible imbalance, the incredible unfairness that is being established here and the lengths to which this government will go to avoid public scrutiny and taxpayer accountability when it comes to money going into their own pockets. That's what this is about. That's what this legislation will do.

Under Bill 82, someone who was not elected, someone who is not accountable to the people of Ontario, will simply deliver to the Speaker a report recommending a pay increase for MPPs and then it immediately becomes effective. Keep in mind the government has wanted a 32% pay increase since last summer, and if the commissioner should recommend a retroactive increase, that too becomes automatically implemented with the stroke of a pen. The minimum wage issue, the issue of how much workers who work for the minimum wage should be paid, we can't even get on the agenda for a year, and yet all of these things will be decided by the stroke of a pen behind a closed door with no public scrutiny and immediately will become law. That is what I think is so wrong about this.

I want to say a few words about the issues in general. I have no problem with an independent commission looking at what salaries of MPPs, cabinet ministers and the Premier are. I have no problem with that. As I alluded to earlier in my remarks, though, if there's going to be an independent commissioner who's going to look at these things, then it ought to be part of the design of legislation to say that we should be directly compared with MLAs in other provinces. How can you have a comparative system that has integrity if the process won't even compare your pay with the pay of other MLAs? It seems to me they are the direct comparators, that you'd want to start there in terms of making a comparison, but that's not in this bill. This bill doesn't require a comparison between the pay of members of the Legislature in Ontario and the members of Legislatures in other provinces. That's not part of this bill.

Are there any other parameters that would help? Is there anything here that in the words of the legislation would introduce some accountability, some scrutiny? I regret to say there is absolutely nothing. There are no guidelines, no provisions which would require a fair comparison with other legislators in other provinces, nothing like that. All those things are absent from this bill. This is, in the broadest terms, a blank cheque.

There's something else I find objectionable about this. The person who is supposed to do this is someone called the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner is hired by the members of the Legislature. The Integrity Commissioner is not someone out there who is selected, let us say, by some process of arbitration. No, the Integrity Commissioner is hired by the members of the Legislature.

The Integrity Commissioner is someone who, on several occasions, will have the opportunity to spend a lot of time with members of the Legislature. I don't think that impugns the integrity of the commissioner, but if you want to have a process that is clearly above-board, I think you would want to have someone who stands back, who is not acquainted, who can be objective in every sense of the word, can be independent in every sense of the word, can be neutral in every sense of the word. Someone who is an employee of the Legislature, who is in effect hired by the members of the Legislature, in the most objective examination I don't think can fill that bill of neutrality, independence and objectivity that one should require in this kind of position. In fact, I would argue that what the government has in mind here is someone who is too close, too intimately involved, too familiar with the members of the Legislature and whose employment prospects are too much determined by members of the Legislature.

For people at home, let me give you a bit of history about this. The former Integrity Commissioner, who resigned earlier this spring, resigned because his credibility was called into question by members of the Legislature. He made a decision as Integrity Commissioner. I think he was perhaps unwise in asking for outside advice, advice that clearly was not within the parameters of his job; his integrity was called into question and so he had to resign. In other words, the Integrity Commissioner himself can be subjected to criticism, can be asked and can in effect be impugned by MPPs, and this person, this office is then supposed to make decisions about the salary and benefits of MPPs? I think by any measure that kind of structure lacks the integrity, lacks the objectivity, the neutrality, the independence, the distance that one would want to have if someone were going to be considering these questions.

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I think there are other problems here, as well, that need to be identified. Fundamentally, if we're going to look at this as an issue of fairness, I don't see how a government of the day or legislators as a whole can say consistently to people out there, hard-working women and men, people who work in our community care access centres, people who work in the nursing homes and homes for the aged, people who work in our hospitals and our ambulances, people who look after our children—child care workers—teachers, people who work with the associations for community living, firefighters, police officers, municipal workers, many of whom, frankly, have dangerous or very stressful jobs, "You're limited to 2% a year or less in terms of pay increases. You are on a strict diet in terms of your pay," but, at the same time, sanction a process which they know from the context of the last year is designed to reward them with a 32% or 42% or 52% or 62% increase. It simply flies in the face of any sense of fairness, any sense of a just result.

I think that's what the public will find so distasteful about this. A government will consistently say, as this

government has over the last six years, "You are limited to 2% a year. You, the nurse, you, the ambulance paramedic, you, the child care teacher, you, the high school teacher, you, who do such stressful and difficult work looking after handicapped adults, are limited to 2% or less a year." Yet legislators will try to find a way to absolve themselves of that same rule, will try to find a way to, in effect, put themselves in a different category and reward themselves with a substantial increase in pay and benefits. That is what strikes at the public's sense of fairness. At the end of the day, that is what is so wrong with this piece of legislation.

Over the last two years, as the government was making noises about wanting a pay increase, I wondered why, when they announced shortly after the election that the public sector guideline would be 2% or less, they didn't come forward then and say, "To show our good faith, the only pay increase we, as members of the Legislature, will accept will be 2%." I wondered why they didn't do that in the fall of 1999 and then in the spring of 2000 and again this year, demonstrating good faith year over year with the people out there, the broader public of Ontario, those hard-working men and women. Why didn't the government say, in effect, "Well, 2% in 1999 and, again, 2% in 2000 and 2% in 2001"? For members of the Legislature it would have meant a cumulative 7% increase in pay over the last three years, which is not insubstantial. Based on a base income of \$78,000 a year, a 7% increase is not insubstantial. That would bring MPPs' pay up to in excess of \$85,000 a year.

Now I know the reason: members of the government were not interested in playing by the same rules they demand of everyone else out there. Members of the government were not interested in setting an example, in saying to people, "If it should be 2% for child care workers and teachers and nurses, then all we will accept is 2% as well." That was never part of the government's game. That was never part of their plan. From the beginning, their plan has been to say to those hard-working women and men out there, "Two per cent or less," but then to find a way to reward themselves with much more. Again, that speaks to the fundamental unfairness of this.

To give you a measure of the unfairness, we know that since January 1, 1995, the consumer price index, which measures inflation in Ontario, has increased by 13.1%. So in six and a half years, inflation has increased prices etc by 13.1%. Applying that 13.1% to a minimum wage worker who now gets paid \$6.85 an hour would bring a minimum wage worker up to \$7.75 an hour. Simply applying the consumer price index, 13.1% would bring a minimum wage worker up to \$7.75 an hour. Do we hear the government saying the minimum wage ought to be subject to some kind of independent process where an arbitrator or commissioner could look at what's happened to the minimum wage in other jurisdictions, could look at inflation and then make an objective decision? Do we see any move by the government on that side of fairness? As

I say, the increase would be 90 cents an hour for someone working for the minimum wage.

No, government isn't interested in that at all. It's not interested in having someone—a commissioner, an arbitrator, an independent body—look at the minimum wage, look at inflation, look at what's happened to the minimum wage in other jurisdictions and then make a decision. No. When it comes to the lowest-paid workers in the province, they're not interested in that, not for a minute.

For the public record, I want people to know that Ontario's minimum wage has now fallen behind the minimum wage in the United States. If you take the minimum wage now in the United States and convert it into Canadian dollars, it is over \$7.50 an hour in the United States. Over the next year, the minimum wage in the United States is scheduled to go to over \$8.50 an hour in Canadian dollars. If amendments that are now being talked about are successful, it will be \$9 an hour.

Why do I mention that? Because if the government were truly interested in some sense of fairness here, I think they would say, "What's good for the Premier and what's good for cabinet ministers and what's good for backbenchers—if the process of having someone independent look at this is good, then someone independent should also be looking at the minimum wage." "No," says the government. They're not interested in that.

Similarly, we know there is now a nursing crisis in Ontario. Wherever you go, whether it's in downtown Toronto or other large urban centres or small urban centres or northern Ontario or rural Ontario, we are increasingly encountering a nursing shortage. Nurses say—I've heard them; I think all members of the Legislature have heard them—that nurses are leaving the province, going to other jurisdictions, or leaving the vocation of nursing because they simply are not paid enough, given the stresses and strains of the job. They're simply not adequately paid.

If we follow the process the government wants to implement here, I would have thought the government would say, "Let's set up an independent commissioner to look at the increasing volumes of work in the nursing vocation, whether in hospitals or homes for the aged or nursing homes or community care access centres; let's look at the increasing intensity of the work; let's look at how many nurses have in fact left; let's also consider other issues, like the inflation rate; and then let's make a recommendation about what the pay increase should be for nurses."

Is the government prepared to do that? No. In a very short answer, no, the government is not prepared to have that kind of independent thinking when it comes to nurses and the pay of nurses and the fact that so many nurses are voting with their feet and leaving our province or leaving the nursing vocation. If the government believes this process is fair for MPPs, one would think it would want to implement this process for other people out there, for minimum wage workers, for nurses, but no.

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The government was presented earlier this spring with a report by consultants KPMG that indicated that those people who work across Ontario for the associations for community living, that is, those people who work with the developmentally handicapped, are underpaid by 25%. The report—an objective report, an outside analysis—said those people are underpaid by that amount. If you follow this government's logic, given that there has been an independent report, that the report found these people are chronically underpaid across the province, that they receive 25% less than they would if they worked in another comparative sector, given what this government is saying here today, one would think the government would want to put in place a measure to ensure they receive 25% more in pay. Alas no, the kind of rule this government wants to put in place for their own pay they are unwilling to put in place where other objective reports have pointed out that people's pay is far below what it should be. I think it points out the unfairness and the injustice of what this government is doing or trying to do.

Some members of the government, and some Liberals who are in support of what the government is doing here, have asked or want to know what members of the NDP are going to do. I know that members of my caucus work quite hard; they work very hard. I don't expect members of my caucus to come here and work, put in hour after hour, and then take less pay. That's just not on. I don't expect them to somehow say at the end of the day, "If Liberal members and Conservative members vote themselves an increase in pay, I'm worth less than a Liberal backbencher or a Conservative backbencher or, for that matter, a cabinet minister."

I don't expect that of them, but it is our duty as elected members of this Legislature to point out just how unbalanced and unfair this is. The government has set rules for workers across this province at 2% or less; the government has frozen the minimum wage for six and a half years; and now, when it comes to their own pay packet, they want to find a way, a process, a backdoor strategy, to exempt themselves from the same guidelines. It's our duty to point that out. It's our duty to point out to people that it is a breach of the constitutional conventions of the British parliamentary system, that it is precedent-setting, that it is unfair, that it runs totally in the face of what this government said in 1993 and 1994 and 1995 when they were trying to get elected, when they said, oh, so clearly, that members of the Legislature were overpaid.

It's our duty to point out all those things. I won't use the word "hypocrisy," but people out there who have watched the debate, who remember what Mike Harris said in 1993 and 1994 and 1995 and what he's saying now and the distance between them, the distance of \$50,000 a year or \$60,000 a year or \$70,000 a year, and the distance is all a pay increase, people will recognize that for what it is. It's our duty as legislators to point that out. It's our duty as legislators to insist that there be a full

debate on this. It's our duty as legislators to point out that under this government's position, there would be one rule for ordinary people out there but a much different rule for MPPs. I think it's our duty to point out how wrong that would be.

Now, this is a government that, when it brought in legislation on snowmobile trails, insisted that there would be public hearings across the province. This is a government that, when it has brought in other legislation that it was prepared to stand behind, has insisted upon public hearings.

So I just want to say, since this is precedent-setting, since it breaks one of the fundamental rules, one of the fundamental constitutional rules of the British parliamentary system—that is, only the government can introduce legislation which spends taxpayers' money, only the government can introduce and pass legislation which deals with an expenditure of taxpayers' money—since the government here intends to break that rule, to depart from it significantly, I think when such a fundamental step is being taken, the government must hold public hearings. Recognizing the fundamental departure that is being made here, I think the government must hold public hearings.

So I would say to the government that holding public hearings over the summer—if you believe that a week and a half of public hearings on snowmobile trails is appropriate and that the committee should travel to various locations around the province, then I would think, since we're talking about a fundamental departure from a constitutional convention here, that at least two weeks of public hearings ought to be in order. The public hearings should not just be held here in Toronto; they should be held in Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Windsor, Sudbury, Timmins, Sault Ste Marie, Thunder Bay. I'd even like the hearings to come to my constituency, because I think people would like to have a chance to question this legislation. I think they would like to have a chance to ask government members why they think such a fundamental departure from constitutional convention is in order when it comes to their own pay increases. I think people ought to have the opportunity to raise those questions.

Again, if this is a government that believes in accountability—on every page of the throne speech the word "accountability" was used four times. Well, here's an opportunity to be held accountable by the people of Ontario, to be held accountable by the taxpayers, to ensure that the taxpayers are informed of what's happening, are informed of how fundamental this constitutional departure is, are informed how much the process that will be utilized will essentially become a backdoor process and one that avoids all public, legislative and other scrutiny. I think people ought to have a chance to comment on that.

As I said earlier, I don't think anyone has a problem with an independent commissioner from time to time reviewing MPP salaries, MPP benefits and then making a recommendation. But I think people out there would have

a fundamental problem with such an important decision being made in a backroom, because if we follow this fundamental departure from constitutional convention, what will come next? What will come next if the government wants to—this is a government that uses a lot of consultants. This is a government that has consultants that it's paying multi-million dollars a year to.

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Andersen Consulting comes to mind—I believe it's Andersen Consulting. They've actually tried to rename themselves to avoid public accountability, but the Provincial Auditor has come forward three times and pointed out that this government essentially has sweetheart deals with Andersen Consulting. When the Provincial Auditor looks at them, there is absolutely no justification for the amount of public money, taxpayers' money, this government is shelling out to their corporate friends, Andersen Consulting.

What if the next departure is that this government brings in legislation which says that where this government deems a consulting contract to be necessary, it will simply be turned over to an independent commissioner, who then with the stroke of a pen can establish the consulting agreement, how much money will be paid and none of it will be subject to scrutiny?

That wouldn't be such a bigger departure. That would only be an incremental departure from here. It would simply mean that more taxpayers' money would in effect be signed away without accountability, without anyone who is elected, who has to appear in question period, who has to appear before the media, who has to answer questions of all those sorts. It would simply be a way of avoiding all that scrutiny.

Given this fundamental departure, that incremental step would not be that great. I think people across Ontario would want an opportunity, would deserve an opportunity, to scrutinize the government through public hearings and to say to the government, "Now that you're prepared to take this step, now that you're prepared to move spending decisions, the expenditure of taxpayers' money, outside of this Legislature, now that you're prepared to move it beyond public scrutiny, what are the new limits going to be? What's the limitation? What's the rule for limitation?"

If you look in this bill for some sense of what the limitation might be, there is none. This bill is so open-ended, it is so without criteria, it is so without any objective standards, that it would be very easy to see this or some other government saying, "We got carte blanche on that bill. We got carte blanche on the MPPs' pay increases bill. We can do it again."

I think that people, the taxpayers across Ontario, deserve to have a say in that fundamental departure before this government uses its political muscle, along with help from Liberals, to force it through this Legislature. My sense is that they want to force it through the Legislature with virtually no scrutiny, with virtually no public debate, and certainly without public hearings. If I have listened to the comments, if I have listened to the

scuttlebutt that's going on around here, I would say that's the plan.

Such a bill, which provides such a fundamental departure, has to be subject to public hearings, and a whole lot of issues, many of which I haven't had time today to describe or go into, could be and should be raised. I expect there might be a few constitutional scholars who might want to come to public hearings and to raise whether what this government is trying to do has constitutional validity at all, or they might want to come to the hearings and raise their worries, their concerns, about how a government such as this that is trying to avoid accountability here, that is trying to avoid public scrutiny here—what potentially might be their next step.

We insist on full debate and we insist on public hearings. This is a fundamental departure in Ontario.

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

Hon Mr Klees: I'm pleased to respond to the comments made by the leader of the third party. I find it interesting that the leader of the third party is insistent there should be hearings on this bill. Had we had hearings at the time he made the call to the Premier just following the 1999 election, when one of the first calls the Premier had was from the leader of the third party pleading that we change the standing orders of this House to give his party official status—that resulted in millions of dollars of cost to the taxpayer—I suggest to you that had we had hearings on that at the time, the people of this province would have overwhelmingly rejected that, because they overwhelmingly rejected the third party during the election. We said we would grant them that right.

You know, it's typical that the leader of the third party would suggest in this House today he is justified in pontificating this self-righteous position. I would ask that the leader of the third party in his response, which he'll have in a couple of minutes, stand in his place and do the right thing then, to be consistent at least, and tell this House and the people in Ontario that if any increase is recommended by the commissioner, he and his wife will reject it, they will not take it, because they are so justifiably enraged at this process. I would urge him to do that. I will be listening very closely for that commitment to the people of this province.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Like other members of the House, I am reluctant to stand and say anything. But in fairness I want to reference the by-election campaign I was involved in less than a year ago.

This very question of the salaries of MPPs and MPPs' staff and related issues came up. I said publicly at the time that I was very strongly of the belief that the process was wrong, that political people ought not to be put into a direct, prima facie conflict of interest by having to debate and vote their own salary increases, that that lacked integrity. I said that publicly, and I indicated publicly that the only thing I would support would be a fair, impartial, independent process that would take it out of the hands of

elected political people and put it in somebody's hands—I didn't much care whose hands—who could review the issue with a sense of objectivity and fairness and make recommendations.

I suggested at the time that I thought it would be helpful if every elected person signed off in advance that whatever recommendation came back, if there was ever going to be a vote in the House, be it for an increase or a decrease, they would simply agree to that in advance.

I want to just note a couple of things that I think perhaps have been missed here. I'm not sure, but let me just put them on the record. There is no requirement in this bill, as I understand it, that the Integrity Commissioner do this. The Integrity Commissioner may well decide he or she has other things to do. There's also no reference I'm aware of in the bill that would preclude the Integrity Commissioner from deciding to hold public hearings if he or she chose to do that as well.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm pleased to join this by way of this two-minute question and comment, and I'll be pleased to join the debate, if the government permits it, for my modest share of the time. I'll be using the maximum amount of time available to me, which regrettably will be but 20 minutes.

What I find amazing, watching this chamber this afternoon, is the silent collaboration in pushing this through the Legislature in as swift a time frame as possible.

I don't agree with the proposition that politicians should be relieved, because of some conflict of interest, of accepting responsibility for setting their salaries. I quite frankly think the referral out is something of a cop-out.

My colleagues in the NDP caucus work hard; they work darned hard. I have no hesitation in saying that. They work incredibly long hours, and they're incredibly committed to their constituents, to this chamber and to their roles. But at the same time, they, as responsible people—for instance, New Democrats have voted on every single budget the Tories have offered, and I tell you we've been consistently opposing those budgets. Yes, MPPs' salaries are at a sufficiently high level that we are just beginning to be in that income range where we are the greatest beneficiaries of the tax cuts Mike Harris has imposed. That wasn't perceived as a conflict of interest then. So I say to my Liberal colleagues, why isn't it a conflict of interest when you don't remove yourself from voting on tax cuts you may or may not benefit from?

Yes, we New Democrats believe we have to accept responsibility for the salaries we set for ourselves, that it has to be done responsibly, that you can't cop out by sending it out and that it's a shame to rush it through this House at the accelerated pace that's happening this afternoon.

1700

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Transportation): It's a bit of a shame that we now find ourselves in a situation where, if I'm following the debate fairly, all parties here seem to agree that an independent body should make the

decision. I listened very carefully to the debate. Perhaps the member from Niagara disagrees with his own caucus, which is not unusual, but the reality is that everyone seems to understand that taking it outside the realm of this Legislature and allowing someone else to make that decision is a fair decision.

The member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot is absolutely correct in his statement that he was very clear, unequivocal and on the record that it should be a different process. I, myself, going many years back, have looked at municipal pay raises and asked the same question as a community activist in my own town: why was it that municipal politicians were making the decision about their pay raise shortly after an election? It seems to be an ongoing thing that occurs across the province. Why is it? Some municipalities have found ways and means to make the decision outside their realm so that it just occurs on an ongoing basis.

In this place, we seem to have come across an agreement that if the Integrity Commissioner—incidentally, for the people who are watching at home, the Integrity Commissioner is responsible for maintaining the integrity of this place. The Integrity Commissioner says when we are in conflict or not. What better person for the legislators to pass that responsibility to than the Integrity Commissioner for the province of Ontario? I think it's fair. I think it's reasonable. I think it removes it from our hands and allows someone independent of us to make that decision for us.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Hampton: I want to correct the misconception of the member for Stoney Creek, the Minister of Transportation. No one in this Legislature would object to having an independent body review and make recommendations about MPPs' salaries and benefits. I don't think anyone would object to that. I wouldn't object if that happened and there were some criteria set out within the legislation. I said, for example, that one of the first comparators ought to be what MLAs in other Canadian provinces are paid. That's a direct comparison. If the government brought forward such legislation, I think that objectively most of us here could agree with it. What I object to is legislation that has absolutely no criteria to it. Through the context of what the government has tried to do already—a 32% pay increase, a 42% pay increase—we know what they're up to and that they now want to do this with a stroke of a pen.

I've got no problems with having someone independent do the analysis and make a recommendation. But at the end of the day I think we have to continue to be held accountable. You can't say to people out there, "You're limited to 2%," and then subscribe a 42% pay increase for yourselves.

I would just say to the chief government whip, I remember the conversation with the Premier somewhat differently. I phoned to congratulate him on election night, and he said, "You know, we have decreased the size of the Legislature by a certain per cent; we are going to decrease the numbers needed for quorum and we're

going to decrease the numbers as well proportionately." That was your Premier speaking, and you ought to talk to him about it.

But I would say further—

Hon Mr Klees: Are you going to take it?

Mr Hampton: I'll make that personal decision after we have finished—

Interjections: Shame, shame, shame.

Interjection: Have the courage of your convictions.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Bisson: I get but a mere 20 minutes in order to comment on this. This is actually not the straight up-and-down issue that people would like to make it, because it's related to a number of other issues, and I just want to set that out.

First of all, I have difficulty in throwing this whole issue off to the Integrity Commissioner and allowing the Integrity Commissioner after that to make the entire decision without any kind of a comment from the Legislature, from the people who make the rules of this House and make the laws of this land; I do have a problem.

I don't have a problem referring it out so that they can come back with an opinion, but certainly, if the Legislature of Ontario, as the federal House of Commons and as all other Legislatures across the province, is able to pass laws that decide everything from how much money we should spend as a Legislature on various spending areas within our responsibilities such as education and health care, certainly we should be able to make a decision as legislators, if we think it is reasonable, on what is being recommended to us by an outside source, be it an Integrity Commissioner or an outside committee of some type. I don't believe that we should be getting rid of our responsibility altogether. I think that leads to a whole bunch of issues that I feel somewhat uncomfortable with.

I want to say also, at the outset, I don't mean to and I don't want to devalue the work we do as legislators. I think that has happened far too often in this House, not only in this session but in sessions before. I remember Mike Harris, when he was the leader of the third party, going out there and saying that the gold-plated pensions that members were getting in this assembly had to be scrapped, and how he tried to demean all of the legislators who were at that time sitting in the Legislature, between 1990-95, and how he campaigned on that issue.

I remember the 18-wheel truck sitting in front of the Legislature a mere month before the campaign started in 1995, in May of that year, where Mike Harris put an extra 31 or 33 seats on top of that truck, saying, "Let's get rid of all those other politicians. They're no darned good. We've got to get rid of them."

I don't want to participate in a thing that sets out to devalue the work we do as legislators, because I believe that the work we do here is important and I do believe it's valued. But I have difficulty with a few premises that the government is coming to us with by way of this bill.

The first one I have set out: I don't believe we should absolve ourselves of the responsibility that I think is

incumbent upon us to make a decision, as legislators, by a vote in this House, either by a whip vote or by a free vote—I would argue a free vote—that basically says how much we should be making. If we feel strongly as legislators, as people who vote in this House, that we deserve 10%, 15%, 2%, 30% or 35%, whatever that figure might be that comes back, we should have the courage to stand up in this House and we should either vote for or against. I think we at least deserve that and we deserve to do that for the constituents across the province of Ontario, not only your own riding.

I would suspect that many people in Ontario agree we should get more money. I don't argue that for a second. I note there was an article in the Timmins Daily Press last week that I got a chance to read—somebody pointed it out to me—basically where they did a streeter and they said, "Do you think MPPs should get a raise?" Much to my surprise, five out of six people who were polled said yes. Of course, that's not scientific; that's just a person with a camera on the street corner from the daily press asking the question, but I think it does indicate there are people out there who believe that we do work hard and deserve whatever money we get.

I don't want to argue that we as members should take a step back or we as members should flog ourselves on the back or we as members should somehow beat each other up because we do this as a job. I believe the work we do is valued, I believe it's important that we do it well, and I believe it's important that you pay people well in order to attract candidates who are willing to run in provincial elections who can properly represent their ridings.

I know many people who've come to this Legislature who have taken cuts in pay to get here. I was one of them. I worked at the Ontario Federation of Labour, and when I first came here I took a reduction in pay.

But I have great difficulty with where the government is going today. Now, I was part of the Bob Rae government, 1990 to 1995. I was part of a government that had to go to the people of Ontario, by way of the social contract, by way of budget compression, and say that we had to find a way "to tighten our belts" so that we could manage better with the money that was coming in. Here we were in the middle of a recession that started before we got to office. In fact, the Liberals, the Peterson government, had run in 1990, if you remember, saying that they had a surplus. We got elected, opened the books and in September of that year the deficit actually had accumulated to almost \$4.5 billion. Annualize that deficit at the end of the year, when you looked at the whole thing, and it was closer to \$9.5 billion.

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So we as a government had to go to the people of Ontario and say, "We will do three things. We will hold the line on spending. We will not only hold the line but we will reduce by a percentage the budgets to municipalities and to a number of other agencies and ministries across the province." And more importantly, we went to workers and said, "You have to find a way to

save within your collective agreements a percentage of money," and that was called the social contract.

I was a member of the opposition after Mike Harris got elected in 1995 and went out and slashed all kinds of budgets across the ministries of the province of Ontario. Health care has been slashed to the extent that they are creating the crisis that was referred to by Mr Snobelen by way of a backdrop to be able to privatize much of what we now have in our health care system that falls under public control. They went to workers and said, "You can't expect to get raises. In fact, you've got to hold the line on your expectations when it comes to bargaining." We all remember the OPSEU strike—I believe it was in 1996—where OPSEU members were here en force petitioning the government in order to do away with the policies that they felt were wrong when it came to the pressure that was being put on them to hold them to an almost 0% increase when it came to their collective agreements.

I think it's wrong that the government of Ontario has decided that people who work for minimum wage should not get an increase to the minimum wage. The last time the minimum wage in this province was increased was by the New Democratic Party, which increased the minimum wage by 34% in our time in office. That's something I'm proud of as a New Democrat. And we did that during a recession. But since 1995 we've been calling on the provincial government to complete the work that we had started by trying to give some equity and some fairness to wages for workers who work at minimum wage, who are mostly younger people and women and immigrants, who are having a difficult time being able to survive on the minimum wage that they're receiving.

We've introduced, I believe, at least three bills, maybe two, by way of our leader, Howard Hampton, and by our critic through the Ministry of Labour asking the government to increase the minimum wage. We've held two campaigns on that internally—not provincial campaigns by elections but campaigns calling on the government to increase the minimum wage, and on every occasion the provincial government has come back and said no. They have said it is not right for workers to get an increase in wages, because they feel that would be somehow a bad thing to do for whatever reason. So I say to the government across the way, if you're telling the minimum wage workers that they should not get an increase, you're telling government workers they should hold the line on their expectations in bargaining, then how could it be right for us as the people on the top, the people who make all the decisions, to take a large increase in our wages? Again, do we deserve it? Probably. Most definitely, we deserve it. But the issue is, is it right to do in light of what else is going on within the province of Ontario?

As many of you know, in the last week or so I've not been in this Legislature. I was attending, first of all, the funeral for my father and, last week, doing some work with the family in order to straighten things out for my

mom and the estate of my dad. But from comments I've heard from people in the community on the weekend when this issue came out, I'm pretty clear what I was told by the constituents within my communities. They're saying, "Gilles, we believe you work hard. You're valued for the work you do and you should be paid properly. But I haven't had a raise in six years," or "I haven't had a raise in 10 years," or "I've had a mere raise that has not even kept up to inflation over the last number of years."

"I find it objectionable," said the constituents, "that you as an MPP should get a raise while I've had to hold the line because you as an MPP, by way of this Legislature, have been telling people they should be keeping their demands to a minimum." I agree with them. I believe that if we're bold enough in our vision to think that people should make more, we should be trying to do something to provide equity when it comes to wages to employees out there in both the private and public sectors. I think this government could do itself a service, and I believe this Legislature could do a service for many people out in Ontario, if we were to come in and say, "Listen, we're prepared to take a look at referring out to some sort of committee what the proper minimum wage structure should be, and once we get that tabled back in the Legislature by way of maybe a report from whomever we refer it out to, we would then be able to vote on what we think is a reasonable increase for the minimum wage workers out there who are working at the very bottom of the economy when it comes to the amount of salary that they earn." I think that would be fair. For us to do something at the time that other people have had to do without I think is difficult to take.

I also want to say that I clearly understand why a lot of this is being done. Members—and this goes for opposition and government members, especially the government members—are feeling rather raw at having lost what was termed the "gold-plated pension." Mike Harris campaigned in 1995, demeaning politicians and demeaning everything that we do, and one of the ways he did that was to get rid of the pension. Now he's boxed himself into a corner and can't bring back the so-called gold-plated pension that members used to get around here—I would argue that it's not as gold-plated as people made it out to be—and that people are having to figure out a way to be able to make up for some of the income lost by way of retirement years by way of that pension.

I think these two issues are not all related but somewhat related, and I understand why government members and why some opposition members are feeling that the government needs to do something to address the wages of members. I just want to say again—and I want to say this as calmly as I can without using a huge amount of rhetoric and without demeaning the role that we have as members—I think that we should lead by our example. I think for us to say to the people of Ontario, "You shouldn't get a raise for X, Y or Z, but it's OK for us," goes a long way to irritating the voters of Ontario. I think at the end we need to recognize as legislators, as we

normally do in this place, who we answer to, and that is the voters out there.

Je veux dire simplement que ce n'est pas toujours facile quand ce type de débat vient à l'Assemblée législative, parce que quand on parle de nos salaires comme députés de cette Assemblée, il est difficile de se lever et dire, « Oui, on est du monde qui travaille fort. Oui, on a de la valeur. On doit avoir la valeur de l'ouvrage qu'on fait. » Mais je veux dire très clairement à ceux et celles qui écoutent ce débat et aussi aux membres de cette Assemblée qui, je pense, écoutent ce débat, qu'il est très difficile de faire accepter par la population ontarienne que les députés provinciaux vont recevoir une augmentation de salaire ; je ne sais pas de quoi. Ça peut être de 5 %. Ça peut revenir à 20 %. Ça peut revenir à la même base que celui des députés fédéraux. Je ne sais pas où ça va revenir, ce rapport. Mais je pense que c'est difficile de faire accepter par la population quand un gouvernement dit, sur une période de 10 ans — premièrement, le gouvernement de M. Rae, et après, le gouvernement de M. Harris — qu'on doit prendre des compressions budgétaires dans nos budgets provinciaux à travers tous nos ministères, qu'on doit prendre des contraintes quand ça vient aux négociations avec nos employeurs dans le secteur public et le secteur privé, qu'on ne doit pas donner une augmentation aux travailleurs et travailleuses qui se trouvent au salaire minimum, et que, en même temps que le gouvernement dit tous ces affaires-là et qu'il met en place des politiques et de la législation dans cette Assemblée disant qu'on ne doit pas accepter des salaires augmentés par plus d'un tel pourcentage, le gouvernement peut arriver avec un projet de loi et dire, « On va donner à quelqu'un l'habilité de nous donner une augmentation de salaire, » dont on ne sait pas le pourcentage.

Je pense, comme on dit en français, que la population nous regarde et dit, « Écoutez, les boys, les femmes. Ça prend beaucoup de culot, ça. Ça prend beaucoup de culot de nous dire que nous, on doit prendre des compressions, des contraintes sur nos salaires, et vous autres, les boss, allez prendre une augmentation. »

C'est un peu comme, par exemple, les grosses compagnies à travers la province et au Canada où que le CEO, la personne responsable pour la PME, dit, « Moi, je veux avoir de la gestion de la compagnie l'approbation de donner à cet individu et à certains dans la compagnie une augmentation de salaire de 30 %, 40 % ou 50 % », et les travailleurs, eux autres, essaient de négocier une entente collective et se font dire, « Ah, non. On n'a pas d'argent. »

Je peux penser à beaucoup d'instances avant de venir à l'Assemblée législative où j'étais, comme M. Harris m'a appelé, un grand union boss. J'ai travaillé pour les syndicats de métallos et pour la Fédération du travail de l'Ontario, où on a essayé de négocier des ententes avec des compagnies, et les compagnies nous ont dit, « Ah, non. On n'a pas d'argent. Mets ça à table. C'est très difficile. Vous comprenez, notre entreprise n'est pas aussi rentable que vous croyez, vous les syndicalistes.

Vous demandez beaucoup trop. Vous demandez combien, 3 % et 3% ? Mon Dieu, c'est bien trop. » Et tout à coup, nous autres, on se trouve dans une situation où on essaie de négocier, puis on se trouve dans une situation d'aller en grève pour essayer d'avoir 3 %. À la fin de la journée on accepte 1 % ou 1,5 % chaque année sur une période de deux ou trois ans, et la compagnie nous dit, « Non, c'est trop. Prenez-en pas plus. » Là, on ouvre les journaux après les négociations et on trouve que le chef de l'entreprise s'est pris une augmentation de 40 %.

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Je peux vous dire que les travailleurs dans ces instants deviennent très agités, deviennent très fâchés et ne comprennent pas pourquoi à la table de négociations l'employeur a dit une affaire aux travailleurs et une affaire complètement inverse aux patrons de l'entreprise. Je pense que les deux situations où on se trouve, c'est un peu la même affaire. C'est nous, les législateurs et législatrices de cette province, qui nous trouvons les boss. C'est nous qui sommes en charge de la province de l'Ontario. Ça fait 10 ans ; ça fait même plus que 10 ans : ça fait 12, 13 ans qu'on dit aux secteurs public et parapublic de la province, « Vous avez besoin de vous serrer la ceinture. Vous avez besoin d'avoir des restreints quand ça vient à vos demandes, aux demandes pour les salaires que vous essayez de négocier avec vos employeurs. » Là, nous donnons des directives à nos négociateurs de vraiment mettre, comme on dit, un restreint à ces négociations, et ce monde-la, sur une période de 10 à 12 ans, se trouve sans augmentation à beaucoup d'instant. En certaines situations ils ont pris des reculs ; en d'autres cas ils ont eu des augmentations qu'ils étaient à peine capables de garder avec l'inflation.

Là, ce monde regarde ses patrons ici à l'Assemblée et dit, « Bien, voyons : vous autres voulez avoir une augmentation ? Quel culot, voyons. À quoi vous pensez ? Vous n'êtes pas capables de nous dire, sur un bord, « Ne prenez pas une augmentation dans le secteur public, » mais on prend une augmentation quand c'est nous ici à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

L'autre affaire que je veux dire très clairement : c'est très important qu'on reconnaisse ce point. Le gouvernement essaie de nous faire croire que c'est important que nous, les législateurs, on rejette l'autorité qu'on a présentement d'accepter combien va être notre salaire. Juste à ce point, il a toujours été l'Assemblée législative qui a fallu avoir l'approbation pour être capable de décider du salaire que les députés doivent être capables de gagner dans leur emploi. Le gouvernement dit, « On va donner ça à quelqu'un d'autre. Cette personne va faire une décision, une étude, un rapport. À la fin de la journée, on va fermer nos yeux puis on va dire, "On accepte ; pas de problème. C'est quoi ? Oh, 60 %. On est donc contents." »

Je ne crois pas que c'est correct qu'à ce point-ci on donne cette autorité directement à quelqu'un d'autre sans que nous, premièrement, ayons une vote sur la recommandation, parce que quoi qu'il arrive, ça peut

nous mettre dans une situation très précaire. Imaginez-vous si M. Evans revient et dit, « On va vous donner la parité avec les députés fédéraux parce que vous avez les mêmes circonscriptions, vous avez le même nombre de personnes dans vos comtés, vous faites le même ouvrage. On va vous donner la même affaire. » Je peux vous dire, ça va être chauffé dans nos bureaux. Le monde va dire, « Voyons, quel culot : une augmentation de bien proche de 60 % n'est pas acceptable. » Je pense que c'est important que ce vote revienne à l'Assemblée, si c'est la recommandation, et que nous comme députés, on se lève et on se prononce soit en faveur ou contre cette augmentation.

Je vais dire une autre fois à la fin de ce débat : je ne veux dire d'aucune manière que les députés ne travaillent pas. Je ne veux pas jouer la politique avec la question de combien les députés doivent recevoir pour l'ouvrage qu'on fait, parce que c'est vrai que tous les membres de l'opposition, comme les membres du gouvernement, travaillent très fort et sont responsables. Ils travaillent de 14 à 16 heures par jour, sept jours par semaine. Ça, on le comprend. Mais tout cela dit, je pense que c'est important que nous donnions directement un exemple à la population ontarienne et non qu'on commence un discours ou qu'on dit une affaire au secteur public et que nous avons des règles qui sont différentes pour nous.

Avec ça, monsieur le Président, j'aimerais vous remercier pour ce temps à ce débat.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions, comments?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I was interested in the comments made by the member for Timmins-James Bay. I find it a little difficult to understand why he doesn't consider it fair if there's a third party that looks at this, such as the Integrity Commissioner. I can't think of a better person. There probably could be other third parties—but a third party who would look at it objectively.

I remember the member commenting, thinking that of course we all have an inflated value of our worth, but just a short comment: I don't remember the third party objecting back in the summer of 1999 when they didn't have official party status. There were nine elected; they needed 12 for party status. With each one of those positions, whether it was House leader, whip, critic, and particularly the leader of the party, all got significant increases because of position. I'm a little disappointed in the member from Timmins-James Bay not recognizing the kinds of salary increases they lobbied for in the summer of 1999, which was automatic once they had party status.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): If you'd allow me, Mr Speaker, what I'd first like to do is to express my condolences and the condolences on behalf of the Liberal caucus to the member from Timmins-James Bay for the loss of his father 10 days ago and say that we welcome him back to the Legislative Assembly.

On the issue before us, I'm glad, finally, we're having this debate, because for years that I've been here, politicians have gone through the angst of how do you set

your own salary. It's very unseemly, and the public really has a terrible sense about politicians setting their own pay. I can't think of any other group or individual in society that really has that power. Even the most powerful CEO of the biggest corporation in the world still has a board of directors that sits before her or him before that final decision is made, and yet politicians can stand up and vote themselves increases, as we've seen as of late in Ottawa, of any percentage they see fit.

How does one value one's own self-worth on the job? It is very, very difficult. And, really, everyone, including politicians, should have somebody who makes that assessment as to what the job is worth. I don't know what the job is worth and I am very, very comfortable with this type of system of having some independent arbiter set the value of the job. I think that is something that I as a politician can have faith in and I would certainly hope that the general public could have faith in, because I wasn't put in a position of conflict of interest in deciding what I'm worth. I don't think that's the right thing to do, and probably because of that uncomfortableness, we have undervalued our work in this place.

I think this is very timely, and I support it.

Mr Kormos: You see, the problem, I say to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane, is that there is no debate. The Liberal members aren't participating in the debate. The Conservative members aren't participating in the debate. I know what the agenda is: the agenda is to accelerate this through the Legislature, and I find that truly amazing, especially when I look at the haste with which other opposition members condemned the independent commission's recommendation of a 33% salary increase back in the year 2000. Why, Hamilton East MPP, Mr Agostino, said, "I think it's an absolutely gross amount. It's nothing short of obscene." The member for Hamilton Mountain, Liberal MPP Mrs Bountrogianni, said, "I think, given all of the other problems we have right now, we shouldn't even be considering this. It's almost disrespectful to talk about it."

So you see, they had no hesitation in addressing the issue of whether a proposed increase was adequate, excessive, or outrageous, gross, obscene. What is amazing is the speed with which this bill is being accelerated through this House, and how that's being done is by virtue of Conservatives not speaking to the bill, by virtue of Liberals not speaking to the bill so that it accelerates the debate so that the mere nine New Democrats have exhausted all of their speaking positions and the bill has to go to a vote. I don't find that a debate. I tell you it is a clear collaboration between the Liberal caucus and the Conservative caucus in an effort to grease this up and slip it through.

I agree wholeheartedly that this is a bill that could very well go out to committee, a bill that should very well go up to committee. Why the Integrity Commissioner? Why not pick a panel of a disabled person and a senior citizen and a single mother and a northern miner?

Why not pick them as people to consult about how much we should be earning?

1730

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I am pleased to stand and make a couple of comments on this bill. It was interesting. The member across in the opposition made a comment about what is the value of my work. I've been in business all my life and I guess I never asked anybody for a raise. If I could afford it and I had balanced my budget and my business was relatively profitable, I would look at what I was doing and give myself a raise. But that's a little bit different than when you're working for the public sector. I believe that makes it very difficult for any of us to value our work. It's difficult to value our work because really we have no set hours. We don't work 8 to 5, we don't work five days a week, we don't have two or three months off every summer where we can just go and do as we want. So to me it is very difficult to gauge the value of my work.

It's interesting, though, that when our government discontinued the gold-plated pension plans, I didn't see any of the NDP wanting to give them back or wanting to give them to charity. Some of their members at that particular time got major, major, major dollars, but certainly took them and smiled and away they went.

There's an old saying that if you're going to call the kettle black, you want to make sure yours is really shiny. So I have difficulty in some of the comments that are being made by those who are against having a very neutral and unbiased person take a look. He may come back and say we should all get a reduction. Well, that's what we've asked him to do. If it's a moderate increase, then that's also his decision.

The Deputy Speaker: Response, the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Bisson: First of all, to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane: I want to thank him for his sympathies for my dad's passing. Mr Ramsay would know of our time that we spent together out at the Adams mine fight, where we were together, the people from Timmins-James Bay, the people from Timiskaming, the people from Danforth, my good friend Marilyn Churley and others who were fighting that fight. I know my dad would have got a real kick out of that. It was certainly a worthy battle and one that we also managed at the end to have some fun with. I know he would have appreciated that.

I just want, in the time that I have left, to be clear to the members in what I'm saying through my comments here. I don't want to attack members' integrity. I don't want to attack what members are paid. I don't want to devalue what members are worth. We've seen, for example, the debate in this place prior to 1995 when Mike Harris ran on a campaign that he was going to get rid of all those gold-plated pensions, he was going to throw a whole bunch of politicians out of work because we're all a bunch of rascals, we don't deserve what we get and somehow the work we do is undervalued in this place. I remember those debates and they were hurtful,

because I know, as you know as members, we work hard. The problem I have with this debate is, I have a hard time in trying to accept that we should give an independent person the ability to set our wages, knowing full well that that recommendation is probably going to come back with a significant increase, in light of minimum wage workers who have not had an increase in six years, workers in the public sector who have had zero per cent increases in 10 years in some cases—in some cases a reduction or a very minimal increase—and people in the private sector who have been trying to negotiate collective agreements for the last 12 years to no avail. As we are the people in charge of the bank of the province of Ontario when it comes to the budget, I just have a difficulty with our having a different standard when it comes to setting our wages as compared to what happens out there. That is strictly my point; not to devalue what we do as workers.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Churley: I took great pleasure in hearing your speech before you had to take the chair and become neutral. I'm not suggesting for a second that you aren't neutral, because I sat in that chair and I remember having to do that on occasion. It's a very weird feeling to get up and make a speech and then suddenly change and sit in the chair, where truly you do become neutral, don't you, when you sit up there on that throne, because you have to.

I listened carefully to your speech and I'm listening carefully to all the speeches that have been made on this issue. It's an opportunity for us all to do a little concession here and a chance to talk, because we rarely get the opportunity to tell the people out there how hard we work. Lots of people don't think we work hard, and let me indulge in that for a moment as well, because I think most of the people we work closely with know how hard we work and how hard indeed our staff work.

Perhaps when I first ran for election I had no idea what I was getting into, and that's probably true for all of us here. David Reville tried to tell me when I took over from him at city council, and then here, but I didn't really listen.

Mr Kormos: You mean he called?

Ms Churley: Yes, he called here.

You have no idea until you get into the job what's involved, but I still consider it an incredible privilege to be here; I do. I think we all must feel that. The people in my riding, despite the fact that New Democrats got, shall we say, thrown out in 1995 and were reduced to even fewer members in 1999—my constituents value my work and value the work that we do together enough to bring me back to this place to represent them. I consider that an incredible honour and privilege.

Sometimes, because we are into self-confession here, I work pretty well seven days a week. One of the advantages, I suppose, or you could say disadvantages, in representing a riding this close to the Legislature is that I'm expected to be at meetings every night of the week and I'm out and about all weekend. Sometimes it's

difficult. I have a family and, like many others here, I don't spend enough time with them. I have a family life, as we all do. We have, as Gilles Bisson has just experienced, tragedies in our families, which I personally as well went through very recently, and we try to balance all of those things. We don't talk about those things publicly because that's not what we're elected to do, and we try to support each other when these things happen.

Yes, we all do work hard, and there are times when I feel that I couldn't get paid enough for the work, the hours, that I put in. But then I remind myself time and time again the trust that people put in me when they continue to re-elect me and the faith they have in my integrity and my honesty and my ability to go out and do my very best to represent them and their interests.

I guess what I'm doing is trying to set the table here in terms of, we all understand how hard most of us—there might be a few slackers; I don't know who they are, but I know I work hard and I know most everybody here on both sides of the House does. I, like others, have no idea how much I'm worth in terms of money. I suppose if you narrowed it down to dollars per hour it probably wouldn't be that very much, if you want to look at it in terms of hours.

I see Jim Bradley has entered the House, and he loves to speak. I'd love to hear what he has to say on this, actually, the member for St Catharines.

Anyway, I don't know how much I'm worth. I know the Liberals in Ottawa just recently increased their pay. I have the same riding as the federal representative, Dennis Mills, who's now making up to about \$130,000, I believe. I'm not independently wealthy, as some members in here are and as some of the federal MPs are. I am a single person, I have one income, but I still can't complain, compared to a lot of people out there, and I'm not complaining. A day doesn't go by when I don't have enough money, and I did go through a time in my life as a single parent with a very low income when I did have to struggle to make ends meet, when I couldn't afford to buy new toys for my child at Christmas. I never went hungry and I always could pay the rent, but I was one of those who did go through a period in my life when I lived in poverty. I feel that, for me, the opportunity to be making enough money to pay my mortgage—I have my own house. I call it "the hovel," but I have my house—

Mr Bisson: Hovel?

Ms Churley: Yes, my very nice hovel. I can pay the mortgage on it, I can pay the expenses of my car and my bike, I can buy any food I want to buy, I can travel and visit my mother, I can visit my siblings, I can take holidays—I can do all these things.

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I suppose it's a matter of perspective: where you came from and what your goals in life are. I personally feel that I am making enough money to get by on and to occasionally help my son and daughter to get by. My son has tremendous costs, bills to pay left over from graduating from university. I'm sure he'd like me to help him more, but I like from time to time to be able to help him

and to help my daughter, who has a little boy. That's part of what I think I'm making money for. That's what it's all about, to be able to be in a privileged position, to be able to live comfortably and help the people I love whenever I can.

I don't know how much I'm worth, but I will say this: I'm a human being. I said this earlier in the two-minute responses and people from both parties, the Liberals and Tories, yelled at me as though they had me: "Well, are you going to take it if this goes through?" I said, "Yes, I will." I will because I am an elected member in this Legislature and I absolutely refuse to take less money than any of my colleagues in this place.

What I would like, however, is a process where at the end of the day, hard as it is, uncomfortable as it is—because it is very uncomfortable, we would all agree. That's why this thing is being rushed through so quickly. We don't like talking about it. There's no way to talk about this in a comfortable way. But I think we should. If we're going to do it, I think we have a responsibility to stand up and have a debate about it, and at the end of the day have a vote on it. We have that responsibility in every other money bill that exists, that we have to stand up and be counted.

I understand where the government is coming from on this, I really do. I am perhaps going to be kinder about it than some of my colleagues, the member for Niagara and perhaps some others. I understand the discomfort. Let me be a little bit mean here for a while and recall to the members the Common Sense Revolution document that we had held up like this—remember this?—so many times when we, the NDP, were sitting over there. Of course we didn't even have the luxury of thinking of a salary increase. In fact, we had to have a salary deduction because we went through a very difficult recession, a recession, may I add, where we made the choice to invest in people. We didn't reduce welfare recipients' rate of pay, we continued to raise the minimum wage and we continued to try to keep our communities afloat during that period of time. Then, yes, it worked.

Part of the way your Common Sense Revolution worked is because you said you were going to cut the rates for welfare recipients. You also said you were going to cut MPPs. Overall, your leader at the time and certain members of your caucus made a great deal, a big deal, out of the fact that we weren't worth as much as we were getting, that there should be fewer of us, that we didn't work hard enough.

Hon Mr Klees: We never said that.

Ms Churley: Sure, that's what was out there at the time and it was used in a very cynical way to demean our profession which, God knows, didn't need much help, the way people feel about politicians these days. You're the ones—and forgive me if I'm a bit cynical, therefore—who made a big deal about cutting politicians and cutting our pay. May I say, I didn't have the opportunity to opt in or out then. It just went through the way the government wanted it to go through.

But I understand the discomfort, because you started this process to help you get elected and then, after the fact, realized that you had made a mistake, that it did devalue MPPs and that, not surprisingly, many of your members want to make more money. It's as simple as that. We know that over the past several years there have been numerous attempts to get both opposition parties to agree to some kind of increase and it just didn't happen and there was public outrage about it. So, I understand what's going on here, and I even have some sympathy in what's going on. It's a very uncomfortable thing to debate, and when it's out there, people aren't very happy about the idea that you're trying to increase MPPs' salaries, especially by the gross amounts that have been discussed earlier.

Certainly I understand, with the increases that recently happened in Ottawa—I know I'm out at public meetings every night, and I don't see my federal member at any of the events I attend in my community. That is a fact; it is a reality. I don't know what he's doing. I'm sure he'll read this Hansard and call me up and tell me what he's doing, but I don't see him out in the community. One thing I will say for the federal Liberals in this case is that they at least had the guts to just be upfront about it and say, "We're going to do this," and have a vote on it in the House of Commons. I believe that is what we should be doing here.

On the occasions when government members came to our caucus—I was the whip of this caucus at that time, and I had several discussions about whether we could agree to any kind of pay increase—we said very clearly that we thought we could agree to a small pay increase. We talked about 2%, the same that the public servants are getting, those who are getting any. We talked about the need to look at and, indeed, to raise the minimum wage. We talked about the idea of having some kind of package so that we would be getting a fair and reasonable increase, which I think we should have. But I think we should ultimately hold responsibility for that raise. What's happening here, as my leader pointed out, is that this goes against the conventions of the British parliamentary system. At the end of the day, I find it hard to believe, it appears from this legislation before us that we won't even get to do that, that an Integrity Commissioner will make the decision. We don't know: maybe it'll be 2%, do you think? It's possible, but I don't think that's what we have in mind here. We've been talking, or the government has been talking—I should be very careful with the "we"—about a much higher increase than that over the past several years. I believe that, should the Integrity Commissioner come back, it's not a recommendation. That's it, it's set in stone and that is then the pay increase we get.

I believe what's happening here is that the government is shying away, shall we say, from its responsibility to just take it on and take responsibility for it. If they really believe that's how much we're worth and that's the kind of increase we should get, then they should stand up and make the arguments as to why they think we're worth

that and why we should try to catch up with perhaps the federal members, or whatever. But nobody from either of the other parties is standing up today and making any of those kinds of arguments, and I want to hear those arguments. We should have a good, honest debate about what people think we are worth, why people think we should get an increase and what people think that increase should be. I'd like to hear from people. It's all very well to say, "Let the Integrity Commissioner decide." I'd like to hear from my colleagues in this House what they believe is a reasonable increase in pay, should they believe we should have one.

Before I finish, I want to clarify, shall I say, a weak but frequent argument we're hearing from Tory members today trying to connect their quest to give us a pay increase with the NDP's begging and pleading for party status back in 1995 when we lost the election. I guess the only way that argument relates back at all to the discussion we're having today is the fact that the government decided to reduce the number of politicians in this place and at the same time—in fact I made quite a bit of noise about it—didn't they do a press conference with 103 chairs on a big—

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Mr Kormos: On a flatbed.

Ms Churley: Flatbed, that's right—and the Premier getting up and happily saying, "See these chairs? We're going to get rid of a certain number of them."

Mr Kormos: It wasn't very environmentally friendly either, a big flatbed diesel truck.

Ms Churley: That's true as well. But the point I want to make is that the government reduced the members in this House from 130 to 103. Let's be very, very clear on this. You needed 12 members for party status when we had 130 members in this House. In fact, had we stuck to the corresponding percentages in legislation across the country, then we would have ended up being able to have party status with five members. We could still argue that.

Mr Kormos: But they reduced quorum by 40%.

Ms Churley: You've reduced quorum.

Mr Kormos: And they didn't reduce party status by 40%.

Ms Churley: As Howard Hampton, the NDP leader, said earlier, the Premier made that quite clear. He understood at the beginning. There was no begging and pleading here. There was an understanding that when you reduce the number of seats in the Legislature, you also reduce the number you need for party status.

So we did our research, and it was very clear that we should have been able to have party status with only five, but we ended up negotiating and came up with the number of eight. But if you will look across the country and indeed in Ottawa, if we want to compare salaries to how much they're making in Ottawa, then I think it is also incumbent upon you to look at—I don't know how many members are there. But correspondingly, the number of MPs needed for party status is far less than you have here, needing eight at this point.

That is the reality. That argument doesn't wash. It doesn't make any sense. So I wouldn't go there, if I were you. I believe as well that the people who elected us were quite determined that we would have party status so that we could represent them in this House.

Mr Bisson: It's a good thing; look at today.

Ms Churley: As it turns out, it's a very good thing, isn't it? I think we're doing a pretty good job of representing our constituents across the province.

I'm going to lay out my position for you. I believe—I'm speaking for myself here—and I've always believed that there should be some kind of independent panel set up to deal with pay for MPPs. I still believe that would be a good idea. I don't support it being the Integrity Commissioner. I believe it would make sense to have a really independent panel made up of, I don't know—look at people from different walks of life, who are given some kind of criteria for what they should look at, for what is a reasonable amount of pay that members of this place should make, and at that time that those recommendations be brought back to the Legislature and then the MPPs in this place have an opportunity to debate and discuss those recommendations. As uncomfortable as it might be, I believe that is something we have a responsibility to do.

I don't support the process put before us today. I believe that because the government was unable to find another way to get the pay increases they want to put forward, it was impossible to find a way to do that politically, they found another way, a scheme, to get it through as quickly as possible. The reality is, when that comes forward, people out there aren't going to be very happy, and you're still going to have to answer to your constituents if they come forward with a huge pay increase.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions, comments?

Mr Kormos: The Liberal and Conservative caucuses are playing cuter and cuter. They're not going to participate in questions and comments now. Why don't we celebrate this?

Let me say this to members of this chamber: I suggest to you that you should analyze what you're doing and consider it to be a very dangerous precedent that you're setting. A cursory review of American law versus Canadian law has revealed to me that in the United States there is an overriding principle of non-delegation, the Congress cannot delegate its powers. That principle does not apply in Canadian law. Subject to whatever else I might find in my modest research, it would appear that what's being proposed here is perfectly constitutional. However, I put to you the incredibly dangerous precedent you're creating.

What's next? Andersen Consulting is going to set tax rates? What's next with your privatization agenda? You've already delegated to the private sector in no small way the power to set user fees. You've done that by any number of pieces of legislation. This is an incredibly dangerous precedent that could de-democratize this province and further eunuch the role of this Legislature,

increase its impotency, increase its lack of accountability.

This principle of delegating absolutely to an outside body, individual or group is consistent with your increased trend toward delegating to the private sector, which I say eliminates accountability, eliminates parliamentary responsibility and will de-democratize this province even further, a very dangerous course of action that I intend very much to discuss further, along with a whole lot of other things, when it's my opportunity to debate this bill. We're opposed to this bill, we demand a debate and we demand public hearings. We're going to be voting against it.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I would just say to the member for Toronto-Danforth that she raised a few interesting points. In point of fact, there was a pay reduction under the NDP and then there was a pay reduction under our government. It was always very clearly said, when it was laid out that we would take a further pay reduction—not a pay increase, a pay reduction—at the same time as we got rid of the pensions, that as soon as the budget of the province of Ontario was balanced, that would be the right time to look at a pay increase.

In point of fact, the process was put in place. You spoke about an outside committee. There was an outside panel appointed to look at this and when the recommendation was brought in, you suggested that was inappropriate. So since you didn't like that process and you've just spoken about the outside committee, which you rejected when the recommendation came in, here is another process.

I have to tell you personally that my wife has always emphasized that she does not feel it appropriate that we, the legislators, set our own pay. On the one hand either you wear sackcloth and ashes, which I think is wrong and I think you spoke quite well about that point, or on the other hand there is the possibility that you can be accused of being pigs at the trough. Neither of those are very suitable situations. I believe this process is fair. I believe it's worthwhile following this through. You rejected the previous process, which is the one you just spoke about, saying you support it, so I do hope you'll reconsider.

Mr Sergio: I don't wish to skirt the issue, even though it is one that raises many debates on both sides. Let me say that I really don't want to be on both sides of the fence and say, as the member for Toronto-Danforth says, "Let's get a bunch of people, whom we may choose, who will decide." Let me say that if we were to do that, which I have absolutely no problem with, then they will have to look at the other compensation as well, at benefits, pensions and what have you.

I think the route that has been chosen here is a fair one, an independent one. God knows what may come out of it, but let's remind each other in this House that I don't know who has been pushing us to run for this office and I don't think anybody has twisted our arm to stay in this position. I believe that if at any time we don't feel comfortable, then let's get out of it. I think it goes both

ways, that we have to accept everything that comes with this—responsibilities, criticism, and whatever have you.

So if the Integrity Commissioner comes and says, "Hey, you guys, you're already well paid," well, then so be it. There are no other strings attached, as far as I can read in the bill, but if we were to give it to a bunch of independent people, they would have to look really at all other sectors, where we get our total income, salaries, benefits, pensions and whatever have you. So I think it's a good way to go, independent way, and whatever comes with it comes with it.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions, comments?

1800

Mr Bisson: I just want to comment on a point that the member from Toronto-Danforth made which I think is an important point that wasn't stressed enough. That is, she brought her own personal perspective of somebody who's had to walk a mile in somebody else's shoes, somebody who did not have the benefit of being born in a wealthy family, who didn't have the benefit of being as lucky to others—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Well, neither did you and neither did I. Most of us—and I don't mean this as a virtue, understand me; I'm not trying to be combative with the government on the other way. What I'm saying is that the New Democratic Party, by and large, attracts candidates who don't come from wealthier backgrounds. It's one of the reasons why we're opposing this, because we do understand what it's like to be living on lower wages, what it's like to have to negotiate across the table from an employer when the employer says, "No, you can't have more than 1% or 2%," and you do want more, because I negotiated for union collective agreements where I certainly tried to get more. We understand what it's like to be on the side that doesn't get everything that they want in life, people who've had to work at minimum wage, single mothers who've had to raise children on low incomes when they're having to work very hard in order to be able to keep the dignity of the family going and put food on the table and a roof overhead, such as my good friend Marilyn Churley had to do through her times when she first came to Toronto from Labrador.

So yes, as New Democrats, we're taking this from a different perspective because we've walked a mile in those shoes. That's what we're trying to say through this debate, that we understand and accept that members are valued and they work hard and certainly deserve every penny that they get—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: —and yeah, probably deserve more. But the problem is, how can we do that in life, with everybody having had to take reductions and compressions in wages for the last 10 or some-odd years, and then we all of a sudden come back and try to do something different?

We just say, as New Democrats, you should lead by example. It's not fair. It's as simple as that.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Ms Churley: While I appreciate all the comments from members from all sides of the House, let's remember how we came to this today. There were three occasions that I recall where the government tried to bring forward rather large increases and it just didn't fly. Each time the government didn't fly; each time the government decided to back down.

Then—was it last week?—the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound came forward with a private member's bill to do exactly this. Then we heard that there perhaps might be an agreement—which we didn't agree to, and maybe that's why it didn't happen—to allow private members' bills on Thursday, this coming Thursday, whatever was on for that day to be moved aside and that his private member's bill be debated. We would not agree to that. So then, all of a sudden, the next thing we heard was that the government was taking that private member's bill and turning it into a government-sponsored bill, which changes everything, of course. So

now we're in a position where the New Democrats are the only party speaking to this at all, except for two-minute comments, and we're not having a fair and reasonable debate about this.

What is really happening here, and we all know this, is that the government has been trying for three years to find a way to give MPPs massive salary increases and could not find a way to do that in a politically safe way, so it took the scheme from the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and decided to go forward as quickly as possible to have it out of the way and to get themselves out of taking any responsibility for whatever amount is recommended that we take as a raise.

I think that is wrong. I don't agree with the process that we're engaged in here.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1805.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
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Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
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Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
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Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
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Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
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Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
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Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		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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