



No. 36B

N° 36B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
Second Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
Deuxième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 26 June 2001

Mardi 26 juin 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 June 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 juin 2001

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESPONSIBLE CHOICES FOR GROWTH
AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT
(2001 BUDGET), 2001

LOI DE 2001
SUR DES CHOIX RÉFLÉCHIS
FAVORISANT LA CROISSANCE
ET LA RESPONSABILISATION
(BUDGET DE 2001)

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

Bill 45, An Act to implement measures contained in the 2001 Budget and to amend various statutes / Projet de loi 45, Loi mettant en oeuvre des mesures mentionnées dans le budget de 2001 et modifiant diverses lois.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to third reading of Bill 45, An Act to implement measures contained in the 2001 Budget and to amend various statutes.

As a member of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, I'd like to thank everyone who presented to the committee over the last couple of weeks. While we heard from many presenters on various items in this bill, the tax credit for low- and middle-income families to help pay tuition costs to independent schools was the largest issue. Though there were many organizations that made presentations, what I found most helpful were the presentations made by parents and students. We heard of the sacrifices being made so that their children could be educated in the school of their choice. I want to point out some of the comments that were made to our committee when we were hearing from people.

We had a young gentleman who goes to a Christian high school, if the Speaker will indulge me, I will read from Hansard from the presentation the individual made:

"In my family, my parents cannot afford to pay the tuition on their own. My grandparents have generously stepped in to help pay for my tuition and the tuition of my brother and sister over the past 17 years. Without their financial assistance, I could not have received an education based on my religious beliefs, and I thank them for that.

"My friend Darrell and his family have also endured hardships because of the cost of independent religious education. His family has been paying for Christian education for him and his three siblings for the past 18 years. For those 18 years, Darrell's family have paid exactly \$123,565 for their Christian education.... Each year, Darryl and his siblings are given the opportunity to attend a public school or to attend an independent Christian school and not go on vacation that year. Every year for the past 18 years, they have made the decision to attend a Christian school and every year they have given up a possible family vacation.

"Darrell's family has also sacrificed such luxuries as going out for dinner and driving a new car because of the cost of Christian schooling. I asked Darrell when the last time he went for a meal with his family was and he couldn't remember. I also asked him about the cars that his family drives. His family cannot afford new vehicles. They drive vehicles that are 10 years old or older and are constantly in need of repairs."

That was just one presenter who was presenting on that issue.

There's a letter I got that was sent to the committee, but was not made in a presentation. Incidentally, it came from Thunder Bay, and it said:

"We wish to applaud the government for its positive proactive stance with respect to the proposed tax credit. We believe that this credit ultimately boils down to an issue of choice. With respect to our children's education, nothing is more important to us than ensuring that their education is of top quality and that it instills in them the same moral and spiritual values that are central to who we are as individuals and as a family. We believe that all these elements are essential for our children to have a complete education."

Another parent described the situation as follows:

"My husband and I drive 10- to 15 year-old vehicles. This is just one of the sacrifices we make so that our children can go to a private school. We buy clothes at Goodwill, because expensive clothes can't guarantee a future, but a good education can. We are not wealthy. We both hold down full-time jobs, plus looking after our three children, plus pastoring a church. We have very little leisure time, and when we do, it's usually 'fun on a shoestring.'

"We are not crying poor; we just want to explain that we feel strongly enough about private education to make these daily sacrifices for our kids."

They go on to explain why it is they feel it is so important to send their children to the school of their choice.

1850

I received a letter from one of my own constituents who wrote:

“I personally know of many people who make great sacrifices to give their children a Christian value-based education. In my own family I have six grandchildren who receive this education at great sacrifice of their parents and when parents with a family income of \$35,000 to \$40,000 spend their first \$10,000 on education for their children I believe they cannot be fairly classified among the rich and elite but rather among courageous people who help their children become adults firmly rooted in their faith and an asset to our society.”

These are hard-working middle- and lower-income families, not the wealthy upper class, as the members opposite would have us believe. All presenters expressed support—and I think this is very important—for the public education system but explained that the public system just did not meet the needs of their children for a variety of reasons, including religious and cultural background.

Those who spoke against the tax credit generally expressed concern about the mass migration of students from the public to the private systems. Well, the experiences of other provinces indicate that such migration is not likely. In fact, in Alberta, where they fund private schools at a rate of 60%, the highest in the country, 4.66% of the entire student population attend private schools. In Ontario, it's 4.48% with no funding at all.

This is not about giving a tax break to the wealthy or undermining public education. This is about fairness and parental choice. We on this side of the House believe that parents are in the best position to make the best choice for their children. The member from High Park must feel the same, since he sent his daughter to a Montessori education, which he told us when one of the presenters made a presentation.

While the predominant issue with the hearings has been the education tax credit, I'd like to remind everybody that there is much more in this bill. Nearly every one of the speakers who spoke to the other parts of the bill was supportive of the bill. The reduction of income tax rates for the lowest and middle tax brackets completes the 20% personal income tax pledge that was made to the people of Ontario in 1999 and, incidentally, to help create more jobs in the province. This will mean more than \$4 billion in additional tax savings for the taxpayers of Ontario. This will also mean that 735,000 taxpayers who were paying taxes in 1995 will no longer pay provincial income tax. However, they will still be expected to pay taxes to our federal government. I would hope that the federal government would look at that and also help those low-income families out.

Amendments to the Corporations Tax Act to reduce the general corporate tax from 14% to 8% by 2005 will give this province the lowest combined corporate income tax rate in the United States and all of Canada. The re-

moval of the capital tax on the first \$5 million of taxable capital will eliminate the tax for more than 11,000 small and medium-sized businesses. We will also do a thorough review of all tax initiatives to ensure that they are effective and continue to do what they were meant to do when they were put in place. As an example, we want to know whether what's commonly known as the gas-guzzler tax in the sale of automobiles is, in fact, still achieving what it was supposed to achieve. In another area, the government intends to invest \$500 million of the SuperBuild Millennium Partnerships initiative on transportation and environmental issues in our major urban centres.

All of these will encourage the continuation of the incredible job creation and economic prosperity that the province of Ontario has seen in the last six years. Since 1995, the economy in Ontario has grown by 25%. Almost 850,000 new jobs have been created and tax revenues are up \$15 billion. Tax cuts create jobs, and the lower the tax rates, the more revenue for the province. Last year we paid down the provincial debt by \$3 billion and expect to be able pay down another \$2 billion over the next two fiscal years.

None of this has happened by accident. It is the result of this government's very deliberate plan to cut taxes, reduce barriers to growth, reduce the size of government, do better with less, and as we've done for the past three budgets, balance the budget. To ensure this prosperity is maintained, we must continue to act responsibly and make the responsible choices that have made Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to speak to this very important bill this evening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions? The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I heard the member refer to his—

The Acting Speaker: My mistake. It's time-allocated business, so we'll just keep going on the rotation of debate. Further debate?

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is a mixed pleasure to be here tonight debating this bill. It is the time and the place that the limited courage of the government would allow us to have. Here we are today, in the evening, with just a few minutes allotted per caucus to discuss a bill that would rip a hole in public education, that none of the members opposite would have the courage to bring into their home communities and have forums in public schools to discuss the implications with the students who are now exiting our public school system for the summer. This is on purpose. This is the result, the consequence, the deliberate plan of a government that would run their show in that particular fashion, unable and unwilling to really stand up for this as something they believe in.

How do we know that? Because in American jurisdictions where this particular peculiar policy has been put

forward, there were referendums, public discussions and debates and campaigns, and information was not a short-
age. But this government is instead sneaking this in in two pages in a budget bill. Its members have said over and over again, "It's tax policy; it's not education policy." It takes students out of public education, puts them in private schools, and it gives them public funds to do it, with the acquiescence of the sheep opposite, because they had their opportunity in their caucus—more so than we on this side—to say something about this and do something about this. Instead we hear the gentle, soft, muted bleating of a caucus prepared to create this unique jurisdiction, the only place in North America that pays families to take their kids out of public education—the only one; not a single other place.

We hear from some of the people opposite, "You can see what happens in other provinces." You can't see what happens anywhere, because there is no other province that has this particular funding arrangement. The honourable member opposite is in consternation, but it's almost too late. That member had an obligation, had a responsibility, to put this forward in a way that could have been accessible to the people in his community, and decided not to.

What we have here, with the vote to follow perhaps tomorrow, perhaps the day after, is an exercise in one thing: power. The government happens to have the power, but it will find as it goes back to its communities that it hasn't got the authority. They think today that somehow, by giving us just eight days of hearings, by using their majority power to stack those hearings, by using their majority tonight to close off debate, by using their majority tomorrow, that somehow makes it right. It doesn't make it right.

There's nothing in this bill, nothing in the defence the government has put forward for it, tepid defence that it's been, that actually says this is better for Ontarians. None of those people opposite have put themselves in that position. Instead they have hidden behind some of the code words. You can find those words easily. Just look at the unused Web sites from the Michigan campaign, because that's where this came from—the same amount of money, the same ambition—except that at least the people in Michigan who put this forward called it a voucher. They called it what it was.

This is a voucher that gives families and students money when they leave a public school system, that lets them go as individuals. That's what I would say to the people out there who maybe supported this government last time and are now wondering, "Why would we support a government that would tear apart community-based enterprises like school boards and our community schools?" Why would people who used to be called Progressive Conservatives want to rip apart the capacity of a community to provide well for all their kids, when most of the people in that community have benefited from that, as have most of the people opposite?

1900

They've been lulled by the ideological allure of some of the leftovers on the Republican shelf down in the States. We get these very cute over-leavings that are before us here tonight in this particular bill, which says we will give money, \$3,500, to anyone. If you look at the actual content of the bill—I'm not sure all the members opposite have—it says anybody who is resident in Ontario and any institution that may not even be in Ontario. Not one amendment came forward.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Kennedy: This government was forced to have hearings by our leader, Dalton McGuinty. Under questioning, they had to concede. They had to be compelled to do that. When they went out there, some of the members opposite who are providing some of the background music were there and they heard the people. Even their stacked committee couldn't muster a majority of people in favour. We had hearings in the north that brought up people from as far south as Stayner, because there was nobody they could find to be in favour of this thing.

Those they did find I think the government owes an apology to in the end. They have tied religious schools to the railway track and said, "You will be the poster people for this," even though the members of the government caucus know, and I'm sure have told other people in their communities, that 80% to 85% of the financial benefit they are now squiring off from the public system and are going to give to the private system is going to secular private schools. Sixty per cent of the students are there.

This is how it works out. In Sarnia-Lambton, there's the Sarnia Christian School. You pay \$8,200 in tuition. Only \$1,100 of that is eligible for this tax credit because the rest of it is a religious charitable tax credit. So they will get \$550. But the private, elite schools are going to get \$3,500.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Do they want it?

Mr Kennedy: The member opposite from Simcoe says, "Do they want it?" Well, of course they want it. That is the thin, gossamer, flimsy excuse the government hides behind as they try to claim the legitimacy of groups that have been out there wanting it, wanting some level of recognition.

What the United Nations, which this government rejected out of hand last year, said, and what other groups out there who have listened to groups that have legitimate claims have said, is that this should be done fairly and openly, and should be done on a footing equal to the publicly funded systems we have right now, if it's done at all—but not for the members opposite, not for them some kind of reckoning with the province, some way of putting forward priorities. Instead, those members will rip out \$300 million over the next number of years. This bill that we are asked to pass tonight and contemplate these little sections 40 and 41, this blank cheque all the members opposite are so anxious to push out there, has

no controls on it whatsoever. Anybody next year and the year after can go and sign up at a school.

Some of the members opposite are getting a little fearful of some of the reaction they're getting in their communities, because it's been a strong reaction for this very limited time. I want to show you that we've got responses from over 6,000 people across the province who have filled in envelopes. They have presented and they have said to the members opposite, "You don't have the authority." You may think you've got the power. You may think your majority gives you the ability to do it. But 6,000 have expressed themselves, and if this government had had the courage, 60,000 people would have expressed themselves, but this government was afraid to go and talk to them about what's really in this bill and about what really is going to be there for their schools.

When the member opposite from Scarborough says it's not going to harm anybody, he's not saying to the people of his riding exactly what is happening here. For every single person who gets to leave the public school system, it's \$3,500 that the government is going to provide, but it's \$7,000 that they're going to take away from the local public board. Those public boards will be beggared by this initiative, because the very people this government intends to go to private schools next year—and mark my words, while some of them have tried to say how little this is going to cost next year and so on, for a family contemplating going to private school, over the next five years this is going to save them \$10,500 that could have and should have been in the public system, providing the textbooks many members in these ridings don't have, providing the special education that many of the members in this House know is being taken away, even as we speak.

Over the last number of days, boards have been cancelling special education assistants right across the province. There were families here today that I'm sure the members are going to be hearing from in their own ridings, because boards have cancelled special-needs assistants—25, for example, in Kawartha Pine Ridge. Those assistants are gone because of this government's cuts.

We had the Premier stand here not three weeks ago and say, "This policy"—this lazy approach to education that says we encourage people to leave, to make their individual choices ahead of their community—"to get out is made possible because we're rolling in money. We made the economy work, we did tax cuts and that did everything." If that's true, if that's an actual fact and the members opposite believe it, then you stand responsible for the suffering of some of those kids who were here today, rightly looking for your attention and support. We're not here for the powerful. They don't need a Legislature and frankly they don't need us standing up for them. Average people, working families in Ontario need the people in this House to pay attention to them. If the special-needs kids, the slower learners, the people who are off-track because the curriculum hasn't been done with due care, the people who lost access to what

the students have told us is the in-between time with their teachers—

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'd ask you to put those back down on a chair. I think you're done with them now. I'm done with them now.

Mr Kennedy: Mr Speaker, I'd be happy to put them down.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The Chair recognizes the member for Parkdale-High Park.

Mr Kennedy: Those 6,000 petitions represent just a fraction of the feeling out there in the province. The members opposite can show no such enthusiasm for their side; in fact they're happy to slink out of the House. But again I would say to you that without any research, with your Premier on the record a year ago saying that this is a bad idea and that it will fragment public education, with your Minister of Education unable in estimates committee to endorse this and say it's a good idea and saying a year and a half ago this would undermine the ability of public education, fellow colleagues and fellow members of the Legislature, over this summer you have a lot to answer for.

We'll say to you, on behalf of the Ontario Liberal Party, that you may pass this measure but we aren't going to let you implement it. This is not something we accept you have the authority to do. Over the next year and a half the people of this province will hear over and over again about the private school tax credit and voucher you've made possible, the public funds you want to divert away from the needs of people in public education, from the things we want to do in terms of smaller class sizes, the excellence centres we want to have in terms of lighthouse programs to make sure schools work better, the confidence we want to give to parents, the task that each of you wants to walk away from. Rather than do that, you're endorsing this.

I say to you members opposite, it is beneath this House to rush this debate. If you have the conviction of this, let's hear it tonight and let's hear you also call out for a discussion that won't cut off the people of this province. If you believe that somehow this is going to be better for people in public education, let's not hide it under a bushel; let's hear from you tonight. But I suspect instead that what we're going to hear are the kind and gentle mewlings of a caucus that hasn't given this the time of day, that believes somehow this is going to be a key to certain higher-income people, finding comfort with them. But I say to them, we've found the spectrum of people who understand the difference between a commitment to public education, where every child has a chance for potential, and what will happen once the government, again the only government in North America, starts to pay people to leave and get out of the way.

Those people leaving are not the ones who need the particular attention; they will be the ones who will bring the most resources and have the least access. We stand here with an alternative called Excellence for All that we think this government is going to find very hard to avoid over the next year and a half. In fact, they may indeed

have a policy and they may indeed get a law at the end of this week, but they won't have something we think they can use in Ontario.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to say to the good citizens that it's 7:10, we're on live and it's Tuesday, just so that you know what is going on in this place. I want to say to the citizens of Ontario that I'll be sharing my time because so many members want to speak, as is their right, naturally. I think they feel as strongly as I do. Even though I'm the education critic for this bill, many want to speak to it. I'm delighted that is the case.

I want to say to you, good citizens, that this is the same government, the same M. Harris, the Premier, who said he would never extend support for private schools, or at least religious schools, as he said a year or so ago, because that would take \$500 million out of our public school system. Now, conveniently, he forgets he ever made that statement. In the preparation of the response to the United Nations dealing with this issue, the Premier was eloquent, philosophical, dare I say.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Mike?

Mr Marchese: Yes, Mike, good old Mike. Now, I know he had somebody write it. I know that. Nevertheless, the words were beautiful, almost poetic, philosophical. It's hard to believe that M. Harris could have somehow just done a whole turnaround. When you say, "Mike, what happened to that beautiful, poetic, philosophical response you made to the United Nations?" he doesn't say a word. How convenient that his memory has lapsed and he doesn't quite recall what he might have said.

1910

Similarly, M^m Ecker wrote a letter—it doesn't matter to whom—saying she couldn't support extending public dollars to private schools, religious schools, because she said it would take \$300 million out of our public system. La pauvre M^m Ecker was on record as saying she may not have wanted to put it down on paper, but she did. When you remind her, "But, Madame Ecker, Minister of Education, you said this a year ago. What are you saying now?" conveniently she too has a lapse and pretends she never said it. In fact, never for a moment does she acknowledge that she was the author of such a letter. It's very puzzling indeed, a minister, a Premier saying, "No, we can't do this," a year later saying, "Yes, we need to do it because people have asked for it. They want choice. We need to give them choice because that's what people have asked for."

Flaherty came in front of our committee—another pitiful sight to witness—and argued that he's been listening to people and people want, he said, their own education in their own language and in their own culture. Again it was quite a puzzling thing to hear a Tory say such a thing. Imagine extending such government largesse to these multicultural groups who want education in their own language and their own culture. It is beyond me, beyond understanding, that just a couple of years ago they whacked the immigrant communities when they got

rid of the welcome houses. They said, "Ah, the welcome houses. Who needs them? People come into this country and you survive or you don't or you go back." So the welcome houses were gone.

And the Anti-Racism Secretariat is gone. He says, "We're all equal. We don't have to worry about anything because we've got the Human Rights Commission." So the Anti-Racism Secretariat is gone because people of colour don't have to worry about discrimination. Other people suffering discrimination, you don't have to worry about that, because Mike Harris, the Premier, said we're all equal. So the Anti-Racism Secretariat is gone.

The \$750,000 that was in the Ministry of Citizenship for ESL is also gone. You follow my drift, right?

Employment equity was extirpated, in a couple of weeks just gone, because they said, "No, we're all equal in this society, so you groups that feel discriminated against, don't you worry. We're all equal." That too was gone.

All of a sudden, lo and behold, before my very eyes, Flaherty comes into the committee and says, "We've been listening to the immigrant communities and they want their own education in their own language and in their own culture." I couldn't believe my ears—the same M. Flaherty, the same person who was part of a government that simply said to all these other communities that have been discriminated against, "You're gone. All that is gone," and all of a sudden he wants to address their needs. I don't get it.

All these U-turns these people make. It isn't enough that we've got worry about Liberals doing it, you've then got Tories doing the same thing, right? You just can't vacillate and flip-flop all over the map. You can't. It looks bad on you.

While the Liberal Party pretends to have a clear position, saying, "We are against," they have been on the record and they dare not say it. They dare not say which side of this issue they're on. Good citizens, you may have seen and/or heard them say, "Yes, fairness for religious schools." The question is, when? If not now, when? Presumably when they become government. Maybe then they'll extend full funding to those religious communities. I'm not quite sure what they mean by fairness for—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Oh, no. Someone speaks in protest. Caroline Di Cocco, from Sarnia-Lambton, says, "Please, Rosario Marchese, don't say that." Well, I'm sorry, it's not me saying it. I'm just articulating what your own members have said, which includes your education critic and Dalton McGuinty, your leader. Sorry, you're all on the record on this. When your critic and your leader are on the record, you automatically are on the record too. Right, Gerard?

Mr Kennedy: What was it we said?

Mr Marchese: Gerard Kennedy, you, education critic for the Liberal Party, were quoted in your local newspaper as saying, "Yes, we believe in fairness for religious communities, but not now."

Mr Kennedy: That's not what I said.

Mr Marchese: I quoted you here. I called the journalist and she said, "I stand by the article I've written." What was not in quotations—

Mr Kennedy: You've got to quote exactly what was there, Rosario.

Mr Marchese: Gerard Kennedy, please, I quoted you very clearly from the newspaper.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Mr Kennedy laughs. I can't believe it. Hold it a moment. What am I not getting here? I quoted you very directly from the local newspaper.

Mr Kennedy: Quote the whole thing. Read the whole thing.

Mr Marchese: I've got to go back and get that article. But don't worry, Gerard—

The Acting Speaker: Order. It's a nice conversation, but I'd like it to be through me. Thank you.

Mr Marchese: Through you, absolutely. Through you, Speaker, we'll have other opportunities to engage with Gerard Kennedy and M^{me} Di Cocco from Sarnia-Lambton. We'll have so many opportunities to engage each other, because that's what it's about, engagement, right? I like that. It's healthy when we can put things out on the record and agree or disagree: "We said this. We didn't say this."

New Democrats have been clear from the start: we support public education, not public dollars for private schools. Isn't that right, Ernie? Through you, Speaker, to my good buddy here who was in committee saying, "Oh, the critics say this is only for the rich people." Well, Ernie, I'm sorry, 60% of this money—public money, my money, yours, and all the good citizens' and taxpayers' you pretend to represent—goes to non-denominational schools, and these people pay anywhere from 7,000 to 15,000 bucks to go to these schools. Ernie says, "Some of these people are poor." Come on, Ernie. Hardeman, if someone's got 15,000 bucks to send their little boy and their little girl to a private school, I'm sorry, they don't need my help. Ernie says, "The critics say all these people are rich, but they're not."

While it is true that there are individuals from those religious communities who, it's very true, don't earn a lot of money—and I acknowledged that in committee hearings, that those 40% who send their kids to religious schools don't earn a lot of money. I acknowledged that. They work hard. They volunteer. They do. Just like parents who send their children to our public school system, similarly they work hard. They all work hard. While these people who send their kids to religious schools make sacrifices, so do others who earn very little and send them to our public system. But that's a choice they made, to send them to these other private schools. That's a choice that is made in private and it's got to be paid by them, by the sacrifice they make for the choice they make.

A person came representing a Montessori school and I asked her what the teacher-pupil ratio was. She said 1:15. I said, "My God, who wouldn't want to send their children to a school where the ratio is 1:15?" If I got money

from the government to send my kid to such a school, who wouldn't take it? I would take it.

Similarly, Joe Spina, member from Brampton, you were there.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I beg your pardon? You don't like what I'm saying, right? The member from Kingston and the Islands, you don't like what I'm saying. I appreciate that.

Interjection: He wasn't there.

Mr Marchese: It doesn't matter. I'm just talking to you guys now.

1920

They said the Minister of Education is pummeling educators and other non-teaching people who work in the system, day in and day out. They're taking a beating—whack—day in and day out. There has been \$2.3 billion taken out of the educational system. Ernie Hardeman says, "You've got to be made accountable. You people don't deliver the goods. We're going to make you accountable. We're going to change the curriculum, we're going to change report cards, we're going to test teachers, we're going to test students." And then you ask Hardeman, "What about the private schools?" Of course these other parents are not going to be subjected to the same scrutiny and to the same harsh accountability mechanisms you've put in place. Ernie says, "That's OK."

There's so much to say and we have to divide the time with so many friends here, but I wanted to make that point. Ernie was delighted when these other people came and said, "We don't have to be made accountable." Here you have him saying, "We're going to whack the public system day in and day out, but these other people, well, it's choice. They make a choice and we want to give away our money to them and they don't have to be made accountable anyway."

I don't know what you can say about these fine Tories. I know what I want to say about the Liberals, but I don't know what you can say about these fine Tories. They're going to be sucking our public dollars away, as they did out of public education, \$2.3 billion already and here we have another \$300 million minimum.

Mr Kennedy: Are you talking about Tories? I thought you were talking about Liberals.

Mr Kormos: It's six of one, half a dozen of the other.

Mr Marchese: Yes, six of one, half a dozen of the other. That's good.

So it's \$2.3 billion taken out of public education. Now \$300 million at minimum is going to be sucked out, and it's going to go who knows how high; \$700 million, as Mike Harris said. Who knows?

But you have all the Tories on the other side saying, "Oh, no, we love public education. We support public education. Good heavens, we wouldn't do anything to hurt public education." So what about the \$2.3 billion you've taken out? "Good God, Marchese, you've got it all wrong. We've put money in and we continue to pour money in." But the education system is going down the tube. "No, Marchese, you've got it all wrong. They're

just teachers who whine. You know how they are.” And the other parents who complain that the system is going down the tubes? “Ah, they’re whining too. You know how they are.” Only the Tories, God bless them, know what they’re doing.

Mr Bisson wants to follow me. Good citizens, we’ll come back to this issue again. There is plenty of time. Mr Christopherson and our leader will be speaking. Thank you very much for your attention. We’ll see you again.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): It’s always entertaining to listen to my friend from Trinity-Spadina. He is a very entertaining person. When we travelled in committee with this bill, at all times we knew exactly where he and his colleagues who subbed for him once in a while were coming from.

It was really interesting, on the tax credit issue particularly, to hear how some of the proponents of the bill and the school tax credit literally attacked the leader of the Liberal Party. I thought it was pretty gutsy of these people to call him on the carpet and make him accountable as to where his position was. He said if he became the Premier and the government, he would repeal it. The next thing, we have a denominational school present and he said, “Well, we might be able to support it for the denominational schools, but not the non-denominational schools.”

Mr Kennedy: He never said such a thing.

Mr Spina: It’s on record. It’s in Hansard, member. Check it. So there are three different versions of where the Liberal Party leader stands on this issue.

These people are making a big deal out of this bill. They want to call it the tax credit bill, but it isn’t; it is the budget bill. The collective opposition conveniently ignores the business people who came to make presentations to the committee hearings, like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and many other business associations. They came to talk to us about the other elements of the bill.

I want to talk about the section of the bill that I’d like to call value for money. We have to begin by looking at the global economy as a rapidly shifting and changing structure. Every day brings innovations in the way we do business. Every day brings new economic challenges and opportunities. Government cannot stay in isolation from these changes. Government must embrace these changes in order to help us serve the general public more efficiently, in a more accountable manner and in a more responsible way.

The Ontario 2001 budget has clearly shown that this government takes seriously the fiscal management of the province’s finances. Worth repeating are the following fiscally responsible actions of this government:

For the first time in nearly 100 years, this Ontario government has presented three consecutive balanced budgets, and not with two sets of books like the Liberals did in 1990, one for operating, one for capital. We did it in a proper, businesslike accounting way: one set of books, all-inclusive, and a balanced budget three consecutive times.

The largest-ever one-time debt reduction payment of \$3 billion. How does that compare to the doubling of the provincial debt just in the five-year period of the NDP?

Proposed measures to continue cuts to personal income tax will benefit virtually everyone in this province earning less than \$100,000. In fact, it virtually cuts everyone earning less than \$35,000 a year from paying any provincial income tax at all. That’s intended for the low-income earners.

Proposed measures continue cuts to corporate taxes which would ensure the international competitiveness of Ontario business.

In addition, our government is proposing to introduce a Public Sector Accountability Act. This requires that all significant public sector organizations report annually on their performance. These are the transfer partners that we talk about within our government operating budgets. These organizations are hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities. They will have to present annual business plans and balance their budgets every year. These organizations, like the government of Ontario, will be accountable to the taxpayers of this province and others who fund them, because the Public Sector Accountability act will extend the powers of the Provincial Auditor. The Provincial Auditor’s office will receive funding to carry this out.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): We’re dealing with Bill 45 here, not Bill 46.

Mr Spina: This is Bill 45. It talked about it in this act and it talks about accountability, and that’s where it fits in this bill, sir.

But accountability does not end when the books are balanced. True accountability goes far beyond the numbers. Public sector organizations would identify and demonstrate areas where they excel and cite areas where there is a need for improvement. They would report on their progress in finding new ways of delivering services. They would look for areas where the private sector could do a better job. They would report on their efforts to find ongoing efficiencies. We challenge them to show courage, to focus on services that are the most valuable to the people of Ontario, to eliminate programs that are outdated and no longer serve their original purpose.

We will be calling on experts in the private sector to form a panel to review the role of the government in the 21st century. This panel will begin public discussion on where the government does and does not belong.

We will undertake a value-for-money review of all government spending. It will rely on private sector expertise in carrying out this work. The review will answer common sense questions when assessing any government program or service, questions like: is the service meeting its original objectives? How important is the service? Who should be delivering the service?

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: A quorum call, please.

The Acting Speaker: Would you check and see if there’s a quorum present, please?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): Quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

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Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Brampton Centre.

Mr Spina: Now that we have the frivolous quorum call out of the way, I'm going to repeat that the value-for-money review will rely on private sector expertise and ask questions like, is the service meeting its original objectives? How important is the service? Who should be delivering the service, government or private sector? Who can do it better? The value-for-money review will direct us to wasteful activities that could be, and in fact should be, eliminated. It will generate savings to invest in our highest priorities, those priorities like health care and education that are very demanding and are needed to address the population of our province.

One of the first decisions made through this process was putting the Province of Ontario Savings Office up for sale. What is government doing in the banking business? Like, what was government doing in the airline business? What was government doing in the nurseries business? We have no business doing that. So what should we be there for? The government of Ontario does not belong in the banking business. It is clear to us that the private sector has more expertise than we do when it comes to running a bank.

The recent lease of the Bruce nuclear facility is another example of providing value for money to our Ontario taxpayers. Simply put, there was a need for investment at the Bruce nuclear facility to improve its performance without jeopardizing safety. Bruce Power, a private sector consortium, answered our call, leasing the facility from Ontario Power Generation. This is the kind of cost-effective solution that leads to greater value for electricity customers and taxpayers alike. Bruce Power's success encourages us to seek other avenues of private sector expertise, other ways to increase value to customers and taxpayers.

I believe that no other jurisdiction in North America is so actively pursuing value for taxpayers' money. I know the members of this House have heard it before, but I want to repeat it one more time, especially for the socialists who think the only people who can do things cost-efficiently are government. We all know what a pile of nonsense that is. Ask any consumer. The minute you talk about a government doing something, they laugh, because it smacks of fat bureaucracy, boondoggles and wasted money. We have to bring that back. I will repeat it: tax dollars belong to the hard-working families of Ontario, not the government.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Well, in this warm Legislature, the member from Brampton Centre obviously makes a very selective debate. Sometimes when I listen to the debate from the government members, in my mind I think they really should get de-programmed. I'd like to consider the fact that we need

some critical thought over there. There's almost a cult-like environment in the sense that you spout the same words: "Public sector is bad; private business is good." That's a simplistic attitude in that it has nothing to do with what the role of government is; it has to do with this mantra of, "Private business is the only one that can do anything."

When it comes to the budget bill, in the limited time I have to speak, the biggest issue for me is the education portion, whereby we have this paradigm shift in public policy inserted into a budget bill. It isn't even separated. This is how much this government thinks about education. When you talk about the mandate given to this government, they—the Conservative government, the Harris government—provided to the United Nations a legal document with all the reasons they were not going to fund private schools. Obviously, that argument is not important today, for whatever reason. They have forgotten that they actually made this legal document submission to the United Nations.

The other aspect of the flip-flop—of course we all heard Mike Harris in his debate saying absolutely not; he was for public education and there was going to be no funding provided to the private sector. The government has done an about-face. It gave the public in 1999 a whole different view of where they were going in education. In my view, they have disregarded their promise of 1999. Halfway through their mandate, out of the blue, comes this part of the budget that is now going to change and take anywhere from \$300 million to \$700 million out of the public coffers and provide tax credits for private schools.

This paradigm shift came out of the blue. There were no studies done because this government doesn't really care about studies, about getting professional advice. They do care what the Red Tape Commission does when they want to deregulate rules. In my view, they want to take away some of the regulations that protect public safety because it's too important for them to ensure that a number of these companies have their bottom line. That's what is important.

One of the other aspects of this is that private schools—and this government uses the word "accountability" over and over again. In my view, the Tories do a disservice to the word. They like to use it, but their actions are contrary to it. If they did believe in accountability, where they provide public dollars for private services they would ensure there is a mechanism for accountability. In this instance, there is none. From grade 1 to grade 8 in the private schools, the schools do not have to hire teachers with certification. They do not have to abide by the provincial curriculum. They're not inspected. You can start a private school with five students. That's all you need. Where is the accountability there? There is none. Those are the facts.

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When it comes to the real commitment to public education that is missing in the platform of the Harris government, I can assure you that in my riding the provincial

funding for textbooks for the new curriculum has been cut. I want to take an opportunity to drive home the point to anyone listening to this channel and to the members in the Legislature—I have a letter from a teacher who will be retiring soon in my area. She was very well-spoken when she got the fax regarding our schoolbook funding. This is what she says:

“Driving to work at SCITS last Thursday morning, I listened to the Harris government’s latest media campaign—advertisements subtly extolling the government’s literacy tests and policies. The advertisement prompted me to think about money and priorities.

“The provincial funding for textbooks for the new curriculum has been cut this year. In Lambton-Kent, the funding for 2000-01 was \$529,000; in 2001-02, the funding is \$244,000.” Remember, the students going into grade 11 now all need new textbooks and the funding is less than half. “At the same time, the prices of textbooks that have to be government-approved and that coincide with the new curriculum have risen. For example,” and she’s very specific here, “in 1999, the price of the Nelson Publisher book package for English for grade 9 for the new curriculum was \$34.98; this June, the price for the Nelson package for English for grade 11 is \$59.45. A similar situation exists for the core subject textbooks in mathematics and science. Therefore, at a time when the provincial allotment has been cut, textbook prices have risen. The grade 10 literacy test, which did not even count, cost \$15 million to devise and to administer.” Talk about wasting money.

“While no one can deny the usefulness of a valid literacy that is properly marked, how many textbooks would \$15 million purchase? How many textbooks, even at the new, higher prices, could be purchased with the money used to fund the latest Harris government’s ad campaign?

“One of the favourite buzzwords of the Harris government is ‘accountability.’ Where is the accountability in this situation?

“I guess that the next election will tell the tale.”

Betty Carson wrote this because she is a committed educator, a grandmother, and she has also attended both private schools and public schools.

The commitment that the Ontario Liberal Party has to education is certainly solid. It’s important to note that education is the key to economic development. It is the key to what we have with regard to our ability to compete globally. Education is what develops a civil society, public education, accessible to all. All the children in this province deserve a new textbook.

The Ontario Tories do not understand that. They don’t understand that the role of government is more than just to get out of the face of business. The role of government is also about public education. The role of government is about health care. The role of government is about protecting the environment and protecting public health and safety.

As the Tories continuously waste millions of dollars on ads, as the Tories come forward with and decide on

these schemes for giving tax credits to private education for private schools without understanding the long-term impact—you see, this government has a legacy of not understanding how their cuts and their decisions impact long-term, because they don’t have a vision for the province. You have to understand what you’re about. Unfortunately, this government, in my view, vis-à-vis their budget bill, Bill 45, shows it does not understand that government does have a role. It has a role to protect public health. It has a role to ensure that public education attains a level of excellence, bar none. That’s the very least we should expect of government. In my view, this government has abdicated its responsibilities in every way.

I will finish off my debate.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I’m going to speak very briefly. I am compelled to speak in light of the comments that were made by the member for Brampton Centre. There are two points that have to be made.

The first has to do with his comments about how changes in Bill 45 will increase the ability of the auditor to do his job. I think that I’m going to send him a copy of the auditor’s letter sent to the public accounts committee, dated June 7, where the auditor says very clearly that if he doesn’t get, from your government members on the BOIE, the funds he needs to do his work, he’s not going to be able to do his job on behalf of the province of Ontario.

I think I’m going to put some comments into the record from the letter just to reinforce that point here today, Mr Spina, where the auditor told the members the following:

“As part of my estimates submission, I advised the board”—BOIE—“of the following:

“Ontario is funded at about one third of the average level of the other Canadian legislative audit offices per \$1,000 of government revenue and expenditure.

“The office’s approved staff complement has been decreased ... from 115 to 85 or about 26%, while revenue and expenditure subject to audit has increased by 38%.”

Accordingly, the auditor went before the BOIE and asked for an increase of about \$600,000 to increase his staff complement and to carry out two special audits that he had been directed to do unanimously by the public accounts committee: (1) on the OPG-Bruce nuclear leasing agreement and (2) on the agreement with Cancer Care Ontario to set up a private radiation clinic at Sunnybrook.

Of course, two weeks ago the BOIE told the auditor that his budget was going to be flatlined, the same as last year, with no increase of \$600,000. So the auditor wrote to us and said, “The impact of the board’s reduction by \$608,800 of the funds requested to perform my responsibilities under the Audit Act must be considered in light of the fact that my office is already by far the most underfunded legislative audit office in Canada.” He’s not going to be able to hire the staff he needs and he says, “The consequence of the board’s funding decision is that my office will not be able to audit major government

programs and agencies with the required frequency dictated by our risk assessments.”

His conclusion was and this is most important—and I’m sorry that the member for Brampton Centre has left because I wanted him to hear this—“As a servant of the Legislative Assembly and of the public accounts committee, I consider the inadequate funding provided as interfering with my office’s ability to fulfill its responsibility under the Audit Act in a timely manner and is counter-productive to good accountability.”

Whatever the government is trying to pass in Bill 45 that will allegedly improve the ability of the Provincial Auditor to do his work, because the government is not interested in funding the Provincial Auditor properly, he will not be able to do his work which is to guarantee to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario value for money of government spending. That’s the first point I wanted to make.

The second has to do with the member’s comments with respect to the Bruce-OPG leasing agreement which this government signed off on last July. The member talked about how wonderful this lease agreement was. This is the largest lease in the history of the province of Ontario in terms of a public asset and the Premier, a day or so after the lease agreement was signed and made public, said that he would welcome scrutiny of this deal by a legislative committee, that he felt so confident in the value of the deal and of its benefits to the taxpayers of Ontario that he would welcome public scrutiny of the deal by a legislative committee.

I took the Premier at his word, I did. I went to the public accounts committee last October—October 5, to be exact—and I moved a motion for the Provincial Auditor to review all aspects of the Bruce-OPG leasing agreement to ensure that the public was getting value for money for the lease of this asset. You see, the people of Ontario paid for the Bruce nuclear complex, paid a lot of money for that, and I wanted to ensure that the taxpayers are getting value for money for that asset through this deal. It took that meeting of the public accounts committee on October 5 and another meeting on October 12—four hours of debate in total—and the government ended up not agreeing to my motion for the auditor to immediately review the aspects of this deal. It ended up that the government agreed that we would look at this deal, that the auditor should be assigned to look at this deal, once all the conditions of the leasing of the plant were met, which only happened about a month ago.

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So here we are a month later. The auditor is ready to begin now his review of this important transaction, a review that the Premier said he would welcome, and lo and behold, when he goes to the Board of Internal Economy to ask for the additional resources needed to review the deal, the Conservative members of the BOIE turn down his request for those funds to do that special audit. So it’s not clear to me any more that the Premier really meant what he said last July when he said that he would welcome a review or scrutiny of this deal by a

legislative committee, because if he had meant what he said, then the four Conservative members on the Board of Internal Economy would have voted to give the auditor the financial resources that he needed to hire the staff he needs to do that audit.

It is true that the auditor was back before the BOIE yesterday and all of these estimates were reviewed again. I understand that at the meeting yesterday my colleague from Timmins-James Bay, Mr Bisson, moved a motion that was seconded by Mr Agostino of the Liberal Party to demand that the Board of Internal Economy give the auditor the funds necessary so he could proceed with a review of the OPG-Bruce leasing agreement. And you know what happened? My colleague tells me that four Conservative members on the BOIE voted that motion down again yesterday.

So it’s clear to me that the Premier didn’t mean what he said last July when he said publicly to the media that he welcomed scrutiny of this deal by a legislative committee. If he had meant what he said, his members would have voted yesterday for the motion put forward by my colleague to allocate those resources to the Provincial Auditor so he could begin this special work.

Now government members have one more chance—one more chance—because I understand that in two weeks the board will meet again to make a final decision with respect to the estimates of the Provincial Auditor, and included in those estimates of course—

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I’ve been going through Bill 45 for about the last 10 minutes and I can’t find any reference to an allocation to the Legislative Assembly. The member is clearly not on the topic of the bill and, given the importance of the budget bill, I would really like to hear her comments in the 18 minutes remaining to Bill 45, the topic before us here tonight.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order. I’ve been listening very carefully to the member for Nickel Belt, and I’m sure you’ll bring the arguments that you’re putting forward within the context of the bill.

Ms Martel: If the member from Scarborough had been here, he would have heard his own colleague from Brampton Centre refer to this deal, but since he wasn’t in the House when his own colleague made the comment, I guess he doesn’t know what he’s talking about. Next time he should be here when the whole debate goes on.

So the problem is two weeks from now—

Mr Gilchrist: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As the experienced member opposite knows, cheap shots referring to who is or who isn’t in the House at any time are out of order, and I would ask you to direct the member to stay on topic and stay a little more civil in her debate.

The Acting Speaker: There’s nothing at all in my book of procedure that mentions cheap shots, so that is not a point of order.

Ms Martel: As a said, it was his own colleague from Brampton Centre who made the original reference to the Bruce-OPG deal, and that’s what I’m speaking to. I can’t help him if he wasn’t here to hear that.

As I was saying, the Board of Internal Economy and the four Conservative members on it have one more chance to do the right thing, because two weeks from now the board is going to meet again to deal with the estimates of the auditor, and included in the request of \$600,000 for additional funding is the allocation to do the special audit of the Bruce-OPG deal. So two weeks from now, when the Conservatives come back to vote on this matter, we are going to see whether or not the Premier really meant what he said a year ago—July 14 to be exact—that he welcomed a special review, an independent review, of this deal by a legislative committee.

I look forward to seeing what the four Conservative members are going to do in this respect two weeks from now.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):

I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to Bill 45, which is An Act to implement measures contained in the 2001 Budget and to amend various statutes.

Mr Gilchrist: I bet you're going to stay on topic.

Mr Tascona: The member for Scarborough East knows I'm always on topic so that won't be any difficulty, and I'm very appreciative that he's here to share this with me.

I want to speak for a moment about health care. We know the people of Ontario care passionately about their health care system. They've told us that health care is their number one priority, and we have responded in Bill 45. We've invested more money in Ontario's health care system than any government before us. Between the year 1994-95 and the year 2000-01, health-based operating spending has increased by \$4.7 billion. This year it will increase a further \$1.2 billion, to \$23.5 billion. That is the equivalent of \$745 per second. Think about it: \$745 per second times 60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes an hour, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This is an enormous amount of money—money provided by the taxpayers of Ontario.

In the year 1999, the government made a commitment to increase health care spending by 20%, to \$22.7 billion by the year 2003-04. The government will exceed this commitment in the year 2001-02, two years ahead of its original schedule.

In September 2000, in response to the federal announcement of additional funding for health care, the province challenged the federal government to restore the CHST and to do more to help provinces maintain quality health services, and to their credit, the federal government responded to the pressure from the provinces and from the general public at large.

Ontario called on the federal government to commit to paying, at a minimum, 18% of the nation's health and social services bill, the same level paid before it started cutting in the year 1994-95. Around that time, there was a lot of talk by the federal government of how committed they were to home care. Actually, it was non-stop talk with respect to the Minister of Health, Allan Rock, in terms of their commitment to home care. The fact of the matter is the community care access centres are funded to

the tune of in excess of \$1 billion by the provincial government, a very detailed and focused approach to providing home care in this province. The bottom line is that the federal government does not contribute one nickel towards community care access centres or home care. Let's be on the record and let's be clear that the federal government is talking and spinning that they are committed to home care, but at the same time they don't provide anything.

The member for St Catharines wanted to talk about highways. The same thing applies with respect to highways. Where is the federal government's national strategy with respect to highways? There is none. They basically put all the money with respect to gasoline taxes into general revenues, and they also have an illegal tax of GST on gasoline.

Where is the national strategy on home care? Where is the national strategy on health care? There isn't any strategy coming from this federal government.

Ontario had already made a commitment to use any additional health funding provided by the government of Canada, including amounts announced in the 1999 and 2000 federal budgets, for health care. In December 2000, the second quarter Ontario finances report an increase or an acceleration of health care spending of \$498 million—almost half of the \$1-billion-plus federal enhancement to be provided in the year 2001-02. Since 1998-99, Ontario's total base health care spending, operating and capital, has increased by \$4.8 billion, as compared to \$2.4 billion in restored federal funding. Total base health care spending is \$1.5 billion higher than the 2000 budget forecast of \$22.2 billion, exceeding Ontario's commitment to invest all the \$1.7-billion increase in restored Canada health and social transfer, CHST, funding from the federal government in health care.

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There's no doubt that since 1994-95, Ontario's total base health care spending, operating and capital, has increased by \$5.9 billion. That same year, federal funding began a steady decline until 1999-2000, when the federal government finally started restoring some of the cuts it made. I find it very heartening. People say, "Why are you bothering the federal government on this? You've never been able to persuade them to do certain things." They were moved with respect to health care funding. They were moved with respect to tax cuts. But more focus has to be put on getting their commitment to health care.

In my riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, a very fast-growing riding, we have Royal Victoria Hospital. We're trying to get a regional centre for cancer care. The cost of that is very significant, in the range of \$60 million. We need the federal government to commit to health care funding so we can provide those types of services close to home in a riding such as Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

I was very pleased last week to be in Julia Munro's riding of York North at Southlake Regional Health Centre to announce the wing to be named after Al Palladini with respect to regional cardiac care. That is something that will serve 10 other hospitals throughout

the region; it is going to be the regional centre for cardiac care. It's a fitting tribute to the late Al Palladini and the work he did in the community. Peter Palladini was also in attendance at the event, part of the family. I can tell you that Southlake plays a pivotal role in our health care system.

The bottom line is that health care has to be provided closer to home for the people who need it. We can't do that unless the federal government starts to pay its way with respect to health care. They basically have renege on their commitment to home care. There is no national strategy with respect to home care. There's a lot of other programs they said they committed to but there's no national strategy.

Health care spending is consuming an increasing share of this government's spending capacity because of the federal government's inaction. In the year 1995-96, base health care spending made up 38% of the government's program expenditure. That is excluding capital and public debt interest. Health care's share grew to 44% in 2000-01 and will increase to 45% of the government's spending capacity in the year 2001-02. That's attributable not only to the use of the health care system—that's what it's there for—but because of the federal government's inability to understand the needs of this country.

Health care spending by this province has basically been focused on making sure that our health care system reacts to the sectors that need to be provided, the specialty care close to home and home care. That's been part of the program.

I'm very pleased to have spoken on this bill. I know the member for Northumberland is going to follow me and I wish him well.

Mr Gerretsen: In the few minutes I have left, I wanted to correct a couple of misimpressions that may have been left by the last member. If he will take a look at his budget document, it will clearly indicate to him that the extra \$1.7 billion being expended on health care this year is as a result of an increase of the federal transfer payment.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: I refer you, sir, to page 65 of your budget, which clearly shows that the amount has been increased from \$4.1 billion to \$5.6 billion, with an extra \$380 million.

Now, I will grant that there has to be a national and a provincial standard and a mandated commitment with respect to home care. That's what the people out there want and that's what they need as we live in an aging society. This whole argument that we're spending a greater percentage of our budget on health care now than we did five or 10 years ago doesn't mean anything at all. It may very well be that there are shifting priorities, that there are programs that may have been relevant five, 10 or 20 years ago but are no longer relevant, and it may be that as a result of living in an aging society and as a result of people living longer, more of our budget needs to be spent annually on health care than on something else. The percentages by themselves mean absolutely nothing.

What is interesting is that when you look at our gross domestic product in Ontario, we are spending less of a percentage now than we did in 1995. I think the Minister of Health will agree with me that back in 1995, we spent 5.7% of our gross domestic product in Ontario on health care costs, and now it's 5.3%. It is actually less of what we produce in this province than used to be the case.

Let there be no doubt about it. Health care, hospital care and the community care provided through our community care access centres remain a fundamental, major issue as far as the people of Ontario are concerned. The government plays games by saying, "We have flatlined the budgets of the community care access centres across the province to the same amount they were budgeted for last year," but that ignores the fact that in the vast majority of cases supplemental amounts were paid to each CCAC—in the case of Kingston it was something like \$3.3 million, and in many other community care access centres of the same size a similar extra allocation was made—that are being denied to those centres this year. There can be no denying that. Last year, Kingston spent \$28 million and this year they're asked to do with \$25 million, which is what they had originally budgeted for last year. Just about every community care access centre is in exactly the same situation. How there can even be a debate about a factual situation like that, or a denial by ministers of the crown, absolutely defies any kind of accurate explanation.

Governing is about choices. This government made a clear choice about the corporate tax situation in this province. This budget bill basically implements the final stage of the \$2.2-billion corporate tax cut in this province. That is a huge amount of money. If we had set even a portion of that money aside for improved health care, for our community care access centres, to help those individuals who have developmental handicaps—as we heard this afternoon and have heard in years gone by, a lot of these young people are now beyond school age, are over the age of 21, and are being taken out of the schools. Their parents, with whom many of these developmentally handicapped children live, have been given absolutely no financial support of any kind to look after the special needs these children require. I'm sure we have all heard from our local Association for Community Living. We've been told of the tremendous problems these often aging parents are running into, that they cannot look after these youngsters who are now beyond school age. They need help.

The minister in the House today said something to the effect, "Well, \$16 million was put aside." Yes, \$16 million is a lot of money, but when you look at it to service a program clear across this province for adults and individuals who are in that situation, it is a very little amount. It simply is not enough.

The point I'm trying to make is that there are so many programs out there where the most vulnerable in our society are not currently being helped to the level they should be but who could have been helped if a little of

the \$2.2-billion tax cut, the final stages of which are being implemented in Bill 45, had been set aside for that.

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As Gerry Phillips, our finance critic, has pointed out on a number of occasions, why is it so necessary for Ontario to have a corporate tax structure that is 25% less than the surrounding jurisdictions, particularly in the states we deal with on a year-to-year basis? Why is that necessary? I'd like somebody to explain that. There is absolutely no reason for that. If we want to compete with these jurisdictions, surely we want to compete with them on having the same tax level as they have, but why do we have to be 25% less? We want to compete with them on the quality of life we're able to give to the people who live in this province. We want to compete with them by having health care costs much less than in the American situation. That's what's important. By that extra 25% in having corporate tax cuts below the American jurisdictions, because of the lack of tax dollars coming in as a result of that cut, we are denying many people the programs they so dearly need in this province on an ongoing basis.

There are many other aspects of this bill that we could be talking about. Much attention has been paid to the tax credit, the tax voucher system for private schools. I will be the first to admit it's a difficult situation. Many of the people who send their children to denominational schools are not necessarily rich people by any means. But those people have a choice. They have a choice to either send their children to a publicly funded system or to a private school which sets its own rules and regulations in terms of religious teaching and anything else they want to do within the parameters of the Education Act. That's the choice they have.

As I remind many of the people I have spoken to in my own riding, just remember one thing: the moment you get something from the government, whether it's by way of a tax credit or a subsidy in any way, shape or form, the government sooner or later is going to have some say about the programs you're running. When you mention that, particularly to many of the parents who send their children to the religious schools, they get very hesitant and they're not that sure about it.

I was very much taken by the presentation made to the finance and economic affairs committee by the Ontario Principals' Council. They laid out 12 criteria under which a religiously affiliated school could be brought within the public sphere. The first criterion they set out is that private schools, if they want to be part of the public system, must be open and accessible to any student who wishes to enrol, regardless of race or religion. I'm wondering how many of these faith-based schools would fall within that parameter. They go through a number of other parameters as well.

Another thing I cannot understand is why the government was in such a tremendous rush to have this bill passed. Everyone knows that the tax credit is not going to take effect until the year 2003. In other words, they had another full year and a half in which the bill could have

been discussed and debated. There could have been many more public hearings about it. As a matter of fact, there were only eight days of public hearings held.

We, within the Liberal caucus, held some alternative hearings. A week ago tonight, Mrs Dombrowsky and I had alternative hearings in Peterborough, attended by about 45 people. We heard from a variety of parents. We didn't just hear from one side of the issue. I'll be totally fair about that. The vast majority of the people supported the publicly funded system and felt there shouldn't be tax credits, but there was the odd person who felt it was a good idea. But all these people were basically saying, "First of all, what's the rush? Why don't we give this more thought? Why should this be passed when it's not going to be implemented for another year and a half?"

I think that's a question that has to be answered by this government. I don't know what they would say to that. It's a fundamental shift in how we have looked at publicly funded education and the publicly funded health care system in this province.

I say to the people of Ontario and to the members of the assembly here that Bill 45 is a bill of tremendous significance. It will fundamentally alter the funding of our education system here in Ontario. Basically, it will take out of the system—or the government will no longer get tax funding of—somewhere between \$300 million and \$700 million per year as a result of this tax credit situation. That is a fundamental change. That is money that could be used for books, that could be used for supplies, that could be used for special education assistance, that is no longer available for the system.

In the few minutes I have left—there have been many comments made about value for money. A couple of government members made the comment that they're really interested in value for money. Certainly in the throne speech and in the budget speech an awful lot was made of the Public Sector Accountability Act. It was introduced with great fanfare back on May 9. Do you want to know something, Speaker? The House is going to adjourn two days from today. The bill has never been called for second reading; it's never been called for any kind of debate whatsoever. I'm just wondering why the government hasn't done that. Are they really having second thoughts about this? Was it just—how shall I put it?—an effort to make people think they were going to do something, what they thought needed to be done on the public accountability aspect, and as it turns out they really don't want to do anything at all?

I say, as has been talked about here earlier tonight, if you really want to do something about the accountability aspect, then give the Provincial Auditor the necessary resources for him to do his work. Pass the changes to the Audit Act that I proposed on two separate occasions in two separate bills, both last December and in April this year. My amendments to the Audit Act would basically allow the Provincial Auditor the right to follow the money to the transfer agents. Right now, about 60% of the entire budget of Ontario, some \$36 billion to \$40 billion, is money we transfer to hospitals, universities,

school boards and other transfer agents. The Provincial Auditor currently does not have the right to do any kind of value-for-money auditing as far as those organizations are concerned. Yes, those organizations will fight this; I've heard from a few of them. But if you want to bring real accountability to our system, we don't need another committee, we don't need to set up another government agency. Give the power where it should be, and that is to the Provincial Auditor.

Also in the budget bill, the Minister of Finance made a great to-do over the fact that, yes, he was going to allow some amendments to the Audit Act. Has he brought any of those forward? I sincerely question whether or not this government is really committed to a value-for-money system. They talk a great line, but are they really willing to implement something like that? If they do want to implement it, then either pass my Bill 5, amending the Audit Act to allow the auditor to follow the money, or bring forward your own bill. If you want to bring forward your own bill to amend the act, then do it that way. But so far we have seen absolutely nothing.

With that, I will now leave the debate to some of the other members of my caucus.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I appreciate the opportunity to say a few brief words on third reading, such as it is after it's been time-allocated by the government.

I want to touch on three areas, if time permits. The first is that I want to go on record again as expressing my opposition to the tax credit for private education, not so much because I have concerns about anybody receiving assistance; my concern is where it's going to leave the public education system years down the road. The government is arguing that the reason they've done this now is based on choice and fairness, and I don't think there's too much doubt that eventually—very quickly—we're going to be into the issue of equity. Once that hits, we're talking even hundreds of millions of dollars more that, at the end of the day, has to be diverted from the public education system, because this government is just not putting enough money on the line to cover all the needs that are there.

I for one happen to believe that the only way—the best way, not the only way—for us to continue to make Canada, which is unique in the world—and a lot of people look to us to see how it is that we have so many divergent cultures in one country and manage to hold things together. Albeit it's shaky from time to time, but we do hold it together. I think an important ingredient in that is the public education system.

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I worry—I fear—that down the road as more and more people choose to send their children to private education, based in large part on Minister Snobelen's accuracy in saying they were going to create a crisis in the public education system—as long as you create that crisis, people who feel, "I really don't know all that's going on; I'm not going to get active in all that's going on. All I know is that the education my children are receiving is

not the one I received and not the one they're entitled to. If that means I have to forfeit some things in our family to send our child to private school, then that's what I need to do."

That's not the basis upon which the United Nations has chosen Canada—and therefore Ontario, being the largest part of that—five or six times now as the greatest place in the world to live. One of the key ingredients for us has been our public education system. If we continue down this road, I worry that eventually the public system will become where people without means, the poor, go. It's the charity school.

The same with the health care system. That's why I'm so strongly opposed to going to a two-tier health care system. Eventually, as people can afford it and will make sacrifices to do it, they will go to the private system if the public system isn't delivering the health care the people expect and deserve. At the end of the day, if you follow that long enough, what you see is people being prepared to say to themselves, "Well, I'm already paying twice for health, because I have to pay on the private side to give my family what they want, and I'm still paying general taxes to support the public health care system. And the same with education: I'm coughing up money to send my child to a private school, and I'm paying taxes to keep the public system going."

In that environment it doesn't take too long for the average person—good people—to be very susceptible to an argument that won't be direct; it'll be indirect. It'll be almost subliminal. But the message will be, "Vote for us and we'll give you more tax credits, and we can pay for that by cutting back on the public education system." Eventually the average working middle-class family, in my opinion, will be susceptible to that argument, and it won't take too long, going down that slippery slope, until the public system as we know it, both in health care and education, is gone. Once gone, given the international trade agreements Tories are so supportive of, I don't know that we can ever get them back. It's a shame that that would happen on our watch and that our generation let that happen, all for the sake of the almighty buck.

There are two more matters I'd like to raise. One is the issue of the Province of Ontario Savings Office, POSO. It hasn't gotten a lot of attention, because the discussion around the tax credits for private education has pretty much taken the headlines and is the focus of most people's concern in Bill 45. But part of what's in here is selling off POSO. I've raised this before: the government has admitted that they don't even know how much it's worth. When asked by our staff, "What's the value that you're placing on this?" their staff said they hadn't done that. It doesn't cost the province of Ontario anything to keep POSO going. There are billions of dollars that are available for infrastructure investment and other good public investments. They provide an excellent service.

I got a letter not long ago from someone who is a public person, so I won't mention his whole name. Mr M. contacted me and was pointing out that he's been a client for years and years, likes the idea that it is owned by the

people of Ontario and receives excellent service. He says the service charges are among the cheapest out there and that the service is excellent.

Why are we selling this? It's clear. The government needed to be able to point to something and say to their supporters, "That's what we sold. Don't worry, corporate supporters, we haven't given up on privatization yet. Don't worry, it's still alive and well, and here's the example: we offer up POSO and put it on the chopping block." You don't even know what it's worth, it doesn't cost us anything to maintain it, the clients like to have it and it provides billions of dollars for good public use. Why on earth are you selling it? So you can say you privatized something. Even if it hurts the general public, that's not your major concern. It meets your immediate political concern, which is being able to point to more public services that you've privatized. That's all that's going on.

Lastly, I want to raise the fact that, again, it cannot be forgotten that the government is giving away over \$2 billion in corporate tax cuts—\$2 billion. Just last week, I had a delegation here from the Hamilton second level lodging home tenants' task force. Why were they here? Because under this government they not only didn't get \$2 billion in tax breaks, but during the entire economic boom we've seen in North America they didn't receive one penny.

They have what's called a personal needs allowance, which means that people who are in residential care facilities or retirement homes receive \$112 a month for all their personal expenses. After their accommodation is paid for and their food is paid for, what's left, what's designated to them for everything, is \$112 a month. The last time it was increased—quel surprise—it was the NDP that increased it. We did it during the toughest recession since the Depression of the 1930s; and you, while you've been presiding over the biggest economic boom North America has ever seen, not one penny. Not a penny. But you've got \$2 billion in this budget to add to the \$4-billion-plus you've diverted, quite frankly, in previous budgets from public services into private pockets.

Do you know what they're asking for? They're not asking for \$2 billion. They ask for the cost of living over the last 10 years. So they want \$160 a month to be able to buy shampoo, clothes, to wash their clothes, maybe get a haircut, maybe a chocolate bar. Most of them can't afford these things. In the context of things we've talked about here in the last few days, government members ought to be ashamed of the fact that there has not been the will in this government to find even one penny for people who are barely existing out there, and yet you've got \$2 billion for your corporate friends.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I thought there was 6:55 left, but it's 1:54. I would like to indicate for my constituents who are customers of POSO, the Province of Ontario Savings Office, how disappointed I was that the government had decided to privatize that. If it were something that was losing a lot of money, if it

were something that was really onerous on the government, I could certainly see that happen. But I'm going to tell you that I am very concerned when I see—we have a Province of Ontario Savings Office in St Catharines—the government wanting to turn this over to one of its friends in the private sector. Yes, they might make some money, but it's not as though they're selling a losing proposition. It's a good service out there, and it makes money. It gives people an alternative to the big banks, because the big banks are diminishing their customer service these days. They're shrinking the number of hours where you can actually go and speak to a live teller, and they're increasing their fees. I know my own bank just announced a sweeping number of fee increases and that's most unfortunate for people of lower means. I have a situation where almost yearly I see they shrink the hours back further and further when you can deal with another human being. POSO, the Province of Ontario Savings Office, provided a very good service.

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The other thing I'm afraid of is that this government is going to make a lot of announcements next week about such things as saying the emergency department at the Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital is closed. "By the way, we're moving half of the hospital away and it's going to become a glorified walk-in clinic." I hope that doesn't happen. I'm going to fight against that, but I have a feeling that as soon as this House collapses that's exactly what's going to happen.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Bisson: I want to take the five or six minutes I've got left to debate in order to put a couple of things on the record, because I thought it was interesting when my good friend the education critic for our party was making his comments with regard to this whole voucher system that the government is creating by allowing a tax credit to parents to pull their kids out of public school to private school. He was talking about some comments that were made by the Liberal Party with regard to what they have to say on this particular issue. At that particular time I remember the education critic for the Liberal Party, Mr Kennedy, was very upset at the comments being made by my good friend Mr Marchese and saying, "You should read the whole quote." So I thought it would just be refreshing to read what was said and what was put in the record. It's right here and I will read it. Not a problem.

I just want to start, first of all, out of NOW magazine, May 24, if people want to go back and read it. Its headline says, "Two-faced Grits." That sort of implies that they're speaking out of both sides of the same mouth at the same time, something that the Liberals do on a lot of occasions that I've been kind of getting used to in this House. They like to be on two sides of the same issue at the same time and—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Bisson: —I'm beginning to understand their position. They really don't have one.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The Liberal caucus come to order.

Mr Bisson: Anyway, I thought it was interesting because in this particular NOW magazine it says:

“As usual, the Liberals want to have it both ways.

“What a mess. Still, Gerard Kennedy, the Grits’ education critic, doesn’t see a contradiction in the Liberal position.

“He contends that funding for religious schools doesn’t necessarily mean less money for the public system. Both can be accommodated, he says.”

The question the journalist asked is, how? “We don’t have the answers to that at this time,” says Kennedy.”

He’s trying to have it both ways. He contends that funding for religious schools doesn’t necessarily mean less money for the public system.

Then you’ve got a letter written by Mr Dalton McGuinty, none other than the leader of the Liberal Party, that was used at a particular hearing on this bill and it was at one of the public hearings. It was in response to a letter written by a constituent on this issue and basically what Mr McGuinty said was—and this was somebody writing in favour of this particular issue of having public dollars fund private education.

Mr Gilchrist: What did he say?

Mr Bisson: Well, it’s interesting. His comment was, “We are not ideologically opposed to this move.” I just think to myself, hang on a second. How can you stand in the House one day and rail on the terribleness of this particular idea, stand in the House and say, “If we form the government we’re going to get rid of it,” but send a letter to a constituent and say, “We’re not ideologically opposed to the idea”? I have to think to myself, hmm, is he trying to have it both ways? Is it a question of when they stand up in a public forum, such as this in the House, the Liberals like to be seen as New Democrats, they like to be seen as true to their principles, but when they go away and they have to meet with people individually it’s nudge, nudge, wink, wink, “I’m with you”?

We have another article here and this was interesting. This article appears in *The Bloor West Villager* and this is May 11, 2001. Basically the issue was on the whole question of the voucher system being created by the Tories, and it says the Liberal Party says “it’s an issue of fairness.” Speaking of this very idea of creating tax credits—

Mr Gerretsen: You’re against fairness, are you?

Mr Bisson: There we go. The Liberals say the NDP is against fairness. No, we’re opposed to the idea of using public dollars to fund private education. You’re in favour of fairness. You’re with the Tories. You believe as they do. Why don’t you come clean? We have all kinds of quotes from papers, letters from constituents—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Bisson: —who have you on the same side of this issue as the Tories. So please come clean. Would you tell the people of Ontario what you really think and will you

please at least be consistent when it comes to the positions you take?

I don’t like it, but I can accept that the Tories want to do this. I don’t accept it, but I understand it’s what they want to do. I can accept the position of our caucus, the NDP, who say, “We’re opposed.” What I can’t accept is you guys trying to say one thing publicly but another thing privately.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: What’s the matter with the Liberals? Is there something in their water tonight?

The *Bloor West Villager*, May 11, 2001, says, “The Liberals say it’s an issue of fairness. Private schools do have to be funded but in a way that doesn’t hurt public schools,” Kennedy said.” How do you do that? How do you fund a private system with public dollars and, at the same time, not take money out of the public system? How can that be? Voodoo economics? I don’t know what it is, but it’s certainly a Liberal position.

Mr Gerretsen: Will you take the pay raise?

Mr Bisson: On the issue of the pay increase, it’s the same. The Liberals say, “We’re willing to allow the bill to pass.” They’ve helped the government make it happen, and then they say, “We shouldn’t take a pay increase if it’s over 2%.” I take it that’s what they’re saying, that they’re not going to be taking anything over 2%. So we know where they are.

My point is simply this: as a New Democrat I will stand in this House and I will vote against this measure because I believe that it is an ideological issue. I believe ideologically we should not be using public dollars to fund private education and I will stand proudly as a New Democrat and vote against this motion.

As for the Liberal Party, I don’t know. Do you guys really mean what you say? When you vote against, does it mean at the end that you really don’t believe in it? Will you repeal it should you become the government? I put on the record, no. If they form the next government, the Liberals will never repeal this measure, mark my words.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask consent to give the member a minute to explain the rationale behind voting against a pay increase but, like greedy individuals at the trough, taking that money in the middle of the night if there is a pay increase.

The Acting Speaker: Is there consent? No.

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): It’s my pleasure as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance to stand on third reading of Bill 45, the Responsible Choices for Growth and Accountability Act (2001 Budget), 2001.

As has been pointed out before, for the first time in nearly 100 years, an Ontario government has presented three consecutive balanced budgets. It’s a remarkable achievement. It’s also a very definite reflection on the discipline within this government.

Governing is about identifying priorities and making choices. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Liberals and NDP clearly made the wrong choices. They were increasing government spending and it was spiralling out of control.

They failed to create a climate that would lead to economic prosperity to ensure the highest quality of life for the people of Ontario.

The responsible choices the Harris government has made, and will continue to make, will guarantee a better tomorrow for us and our children. The actions of this government demonstrate that we will implement the policies needed to ensure economic and social prosperity well into the 21st century.

Earlier today the Premier spoke on the 21-step plan to create this kind of province and the prosperity of the 21st century. The government will enable Ontario to continue to reduce the net provincial debt and the burden of interest costs on taxpayers, both now and in the future.

The laudable principles of this budget are spelled out quite clearly under the leadership of Finance Minister James Flaherty: fiscal responsibility, accountability and sustainable economic growth. I add one more to that: strong leadership that you can trust.

Cutting taxes: since the Progressive Conservative government began cutting taxes, tax revenues have actually increased by \$15 billion, 822,000 net new jobs have been created and business investments have increased by 66%.

The 2001 budget removes 75,000 low-income earners from Ontario's tax rolls, for a total of 735,000 not paying Ontario tax but continuing to pay federal tax.

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The budget proposes to eliminate the personal income tax surtax for the 340,000 hardworking middle-income earners. Ninety-five per cent of taxpayers would see a cut of at least 20%, fulfilling our 1999 Blueprint election commitment. Building growth and supporting our quality of life are very important commitments of this government.

Ontario's economy is expected to grow in the 2% to 3% range this year and 3% to 3.6% in the year 2002.

Corporate income tax will be fully implemented by the year 2005, and I'll speak more of that in a moment.

A combined corporate tax rate would be lower than any of the 50 American states, our trading partners.

Ontario's high quality of life will be maintained through transportation and environmental initiatives, totalling \$500 million.

Funding to the Ministry of the Environment is to be increased by \$25 million, an important priority for this government.

Through Ontario's Edge, the government has sent a powerful job-creating message to Ontario's business. With Ontario's Edge, a package of tax reduction initiatives and transportation and environmental infrastructure projects have been committed. Ontario's Edge includes:

Tax cuts for corporations, which will give this province the lowest combined corporate income tax rate in the United States and Canada when completed and fully implemented in 2005. That's being competitive. That's being prepared for the global economy.

The elimination of the job-killing capital tax by removing it on the first \$5 million of taxable capital. During the public hearings, that was one of the disincentives

that we found and heard about from many small and medium-sized businesses. For instance, a small commercial real estate establishment is still paying capital tax on the vacant property.

A thorough review of all tax incentives to ensure that they are indeed working effectively.

Building on Ontario's high quality of life, including addressing the gridlock that I and many of my constituents experience on our highways and roadways.

Ontario's Edge will ensure that businesses thrive and grow, attract new and more companies to the province and continue to support the high quality of life that the people of Ontario have come to expect.

On the topic of value for taxpayers' dollars, organizations such as hospitals and schools and municipalities will be required to balance their budgets each year—a brand new experience; a brand new discipline for many.

The Public Sector Accountability Act, Bill 46, will require all major public sector organizations to publicly report their annual plans and whether they have been met or failed to have been met.

Health care spending will increase by \$1.2 billion this year, a 5.4% increase over last year, the highest spending ever in the province of Ontario. We are calling on our partner, the federal government, to provide 50% of all future health care increases. You would know that the Canada Health Act mandates many of these initiatives and then fails to deliver the money; they leave it to the taxpayers of Ontario to deliver the service.

We ask all doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, patients and administrators to help us to identify the best way to deliver and sustain a quality health care system in Ontario. Respectfully, the province of Nova Scotia is dealing with it; the province of British Columbia is dealing with it; finally, the federal Liberal government is dealing with it. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien has asked Roy Romanow, former Premier of Nova Scotia, to take a summit and take time to review the sustainability of health care for all Canadians—a system we've certainly grown up with.

Investing in our young people:

As a parent with five children, this is absolutely a clear commitment that I support—\$114 million more for the early years program; \$193 million total spending this year.

Three hundred and sixty million dollars more for public education this year. There are those who will say it will never be enough.

Equity for parents who choose independent schools: a partial tax credit for independent school tuition over a five-year period, starting next year, up to a maximum of \$3,500, based on tuition costs only of up to and not exceeding \$7,000. First, on the public hearings on that bill, we did hear from many sectors. I've always been fond of reporting what I hear from those committee hearings, and I heard it in Ottawa, London, St Catharines and Toronto, and I can tell you one of the more impressive presentations was the B'nai Brith Canada submission on June 14. One of their observations was, and it takes some

notice here: “Proponents of public education today appear to be more interested in fighting to preserve an inequitable status quo than fighting to create equity for children in the classroom.” Clearly there are those in the system who have not capitulated, who still think we can do better, and I believe that this education tax credit is just one of the tools that will help our children and our families make choices.

Two hundred and ninety-three million dollars more for colleges and universities are being implemented by 2003-04, the year the double cohort—that’s grade 12 and OAC graduating at the same time from high school—will be arriving on our campuses at the same time. I believe it’s close to \$2 billion, creating 73,000 new spaces in our colleges and universities system.

I’m so pleased because Minister Flaherty announced in the budget, with the support of course of cabinet, a \$60-million investment in the Ontario Institute of Technology, with the leadership of Gary Polonsky, a new university to be located on the campus of Durham College. What this will mean to the 500,000 people living in Durham and to their families and their children and their future—it’s a serious piece of infrastructure that’s been needed for years. I can’t think of a more fitting investment in our young people.

In conclusion, since 1995 the province has grown by almost 25%. Ontario’s economic statistics clearly indicate that we are on the right track. It took 10 years to get into the jam. Under the Liberals and the NDP the debt had doubled. We were spending \$1 million an hour.

The job is not done. Clearly this government is on the right track to create a strong economy with fiscal responsibility and discipline and the quality of life that we’ve come to expect in this great province of Ontario. So I am pleased to endorse Bill 45 and support our Minister Flaherty as well as the Premier of this province.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Hardeman has moved third reading of Bill 45. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour say “aye.”

All those opposed say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I’ve received a request that the vote on Bill 45, An Act to implement measures contained in the 2001 Budget and to amend various statutes, be deferred until June 27, 2001. So be it.

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AMBULANCE SERVICES COLLECTIVE
BARGAINING ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001
SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE
DANS LES SERVICES D’AMBULANCE

Mr Stockwell moved third reading of the following bill:

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.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I will not be sharing my time. I only caution the members opposite to give them that heads-up, particularly because we’re in rotation now. They should know that I don’t think we’ll be using our full 30 minutes. I want to give the Liberals ample opportunity to be prepared. You don’t have 30 minutes, so if you have a speaker coming, it would probably be best to have them here.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I’ll take your time if you don’t want it.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I can’t imagine who would be speaking for the Liberals, member for St Catharines, but whoever it would be, you want to give them a little bit of a heads-up.

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): Fix your shirt.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Oops. Thank you so much. Mr Marchese, you’re not leaving?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): You go right ahead.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Oh, I’m going to. There’s no doubt about that.

This is Bill 58, in the street vernacular I guess the ambulance bill, the paramedics bill.

Mr Bradley: The anti-labour bill.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It’s a labour bill, yes, Mr Bradley. It’s a bill that will do a few things. I just want to walk through them quickly because we’ve been around this post a few times. I’m almost certain I know what the opposition is going to say. I can’t imagine they’ve changed their tune.

I just want to talk about a couple of amendments. There was a lot of consternation in this place last week with respect to the arbitration process in the bill. There were three separate provisions within the arbitration process. We removed two of them at the request of the opposition and the parties we spoke to, in true consultation. We heard their concerns at committee. You might not know that we removed two portions—

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): When did you consult? You met with them the day before.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Do you mind, member from Hamilton East? I’m trying to brief your member. We removed two portions of that arbitration process, (a) and (c), from the arbitration process in the bill, so (b) was left. That was revised because of the concerns we heard about. They felt the arbitration process was too heavy-handed.

Mr Agostino: No.

Hon Mr Stockwell: They didn’t think that?

Mr Agostino: When did you meet with them?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think the member for Hamilton East is trying to have a conversation, but it’s difficult because I can’t. It’s one-dimensional here, one way.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You suggest we don't consult. We consulted.

Mr Agostino: When? The day before the committee meeting.

Hon Mr Stockwell: The member for Hamilton East is truly a broken record. He's said this about seven times. I've heard you. I'm capable of hearing what you say. I know people say things to you six or seven times before you understand them. You don't have to; when you say it the first time, I understand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Would you address your comments through the Chair, please.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Through the Chair to you, member for Hamilton East, I understand things the first time you say them, so you don't have to say things six times. I realize probably through your lifetime you've had things repeated often to you. Life goes on. It's just once for me, OK? Thank you.

That was the first part we consulted on. The second part was with respect to CUPE. CUPE had a concern about the paramedics involved in a union who didn't have what they considered a reasonable right to strike. They were going to be sent to the arbitration process—member for St Catharines, I'm doing this for your benefit—and then all those union members would have to go to arbitration as well. CUPE, in their press release, said this wasn't fair, wasn't right. So as part of the consultation, we said, "OK, if those paramedics would be referred to arbitration, we will sever the bargaining unit and allow the other individuals who aren't paramedics to go on strike like they have in the past."

Let's be clear. When we had consultations, we met, we discussed, we found agreement on a couple of issues. I was very upset, though, at committee—this is frustrating—to find that the members opposite, who railed on at length about these two specific parts of the bill, opposed those very amendments. It was shocking. I was dumbfounded. There I was, putting forward two amendments that would change the bill, that they were asking me to change, that they suggested should be changed—they said, "This needs to be done. You should amend the bill." There we had two amendments at committee that did just that, and our left-wing, socialist friend from Niagara, Mr Kormos, who often finds capitalists hiding under rocks, and Mr Agostino and Ms McLeod didn't vote in favour of them.

It was very, very disturbing. You bring a bill in, you do the whole democracy thing and do the second reading, you hear all these concerns across the floor, you listen, you want to hear what their problems are—I'm not expecting them to vote in favour of the bill. I understand that maybe the bill still doesn't sit well with them. But you end up saying, "OK, you've raised a couple of really good points. I think we should amend the bill to fix that," and you go to the trouble of getting those amendments written up and tabled at the committee. Then—can you believe it?—they voted against, not the bill, but the very

amendments they were actually putting forward not 72 hours earlier. The amendments carried.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): What are you worried about?

Hon Mr Stockwell: The member for Kingston asks what I'm worried about—at the table, I might add, which is out of order. I guess my concern is this: I feel for you. There you are saying one thing in the House, and then at committee voting a completely different way. You see, that's why you guys are always accused of flip-flopping. It's hurtful for me to have to say that. It bothers me. Here's a very clear example. I know you don't like it when people say you flip-flop. Who would? That really means you have two positions on the same issue. If they're talking to one group of people they'll say, "Oh, we agree with that," and if they're talking to another group of people it's, "We disagree with that." Nobody like to be accused of that. Liberals don't, I know. They get that antsy face. They get all screwed up in the face when you say "flip-flop."

Here's an example. The member for St Catharines knows this is a good example, because he's a very good parliamentarian who's been here for quite some time and he knows. He's seen people like this, where they say one thing in the House and then they go to committee and the amendment is put forward and they vote against the very thing they were talking about in the House. You know what you call those guys, right? Just look to your left, because there's one of those guys. And look over there, in the blue shirt with white collar. There's another one of them.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I'm not a guy.

Hon Mr Stockwell: "Guys" is a generic term. "Gals." Is that better?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: OK. I didn't want to say "gals." It's "guys." There's another one over there. See that gentleman there from Niagara? He's another one of them.

They hate that flip-flop tag they've been hammered with. They got hammered in election campaigns on it. You remember the big sandal that followed them around, the flip-flop?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: There's one of the cackles from the back. I don't think she heard the speech from the beginning, so I might have to start again for her benefit. I'm briefing the member for St Catharines because he didn't know what happened at committee. Let me help you. I'll just go over it quickly again. What happened at committee was this: in the House your members were arguing that two parts of Bill 58 were too heavy-handed, the arbitration part, and the fact that if you did declare paramedics an essential service that part of the union would also have to go to arbitration. We amended the bill so that didn't happen and we also amended the bill to withdraw the two offending chapters of the arbitration process.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): She's not listening. She doesn't understand.

Hon Mr Stockwell: She can hear me; I know she can.

The arbitration process got withdrawn. I was very, very surprised, because there I was at committee, and when the amendments came up to be voted on, gosh, they didn't vote in favour of those amendments. They said one thing in the House, and then when it came to committee they voted against those things they said in the House. That's how we got to the whole flip-flop thing.

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Mr Gerretsen: They weren't saying that. They were saying they were different.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, no, they're not different.

Mr Gerretsen: Check the wording.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Listen, if you want to say the arbitration one was different, well, there may have been some changes, but the other amendment that severed the bargaining unit was identical.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I've never known a group to have three positions on the same issue. Now they've got three positions on this issue. Holy smokes. This is awful. This is like nailing Jell-O to the wall.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I think the time is supposed to be divided. If you're all going to take the time, I'll have to put it together and take it off everyone. I would like there to be just one speaker. We'll do the clock with whoever has the floor. The other ones will give their attention, and then, when it's their turn, we'll have them stand up and put the clock on them. Is that OK?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Imagine that. The one that severed the bargaining units was it; that was the way they wanted it. CUPE issued a press release that called for just that. They said you couldn't have a bargaining unit of outside workers who cut the lawn or collected garbage—they should not be forced to go to arbitration but should be allowed to collectively bargain. That wasn't fair so you'd have to sever the bargaining unit. That's exactly what they called for, that's exactly what the amendment did, and you guys voted against it. Even my friend from Niagara, the great defender of the brothers and sisters when he's in opposition, voted against it.

That was the frustration I'm feeling today for them. I'm frustrated for them. I would like not to accuse them of flip-flopping. I would like not to do that. Then you could have a good, healthy debate about something. They'll have a position and we'll have a position and we'll have a good debate. Normally what happens is that we have a position and they have a position and then they have another position and then they take another position. It's hard to have a debate, because every time you get close to a position, they change their position. Here's another example. So we were frustrated. I was frustrated. I'm sure CUPE was, because they called for it in their press release.

That's why I think this whole consultation thing with opposition is kind of bogus. You know why it's kind of bogus? Because you do the consultation stuff and you put the amendments in the way they want and they still vote against it. Do you think they really want to have consultations? Do you think they really want to have to make a decision? Do you think they really want to have a policy? I think all they want is the ability to say no or yes, depending on who they talk to. That's what I think they want to do.

You know, I've been in politics a long time, but I never thought I'd see the day where I'd find a whole series of people who call themselves a party who all think that way, each and every one of them. They all think the same way. They all think it's OK to have two or three positions on the same issue. It's amazing. They've made a party out of it. They've got tax credits. You give money to them and you can fund them and they have campaign signs. They're under the slogan of Liberals, but really what it means is this is a party that can have all the positions you want on any one issue. That's how they do it. That's a concern.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think I've touched a raw nerve here, because I just saw the member turn around and give them the marching orders on how to heckle after this is done. Don't deny you did it either. I caught that. I appreciate it. I saw that.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I saw it. Thank you, Mr Speaker. I saw them turn around and say, "Here's the new message on heckling. Let's try this approach. We've got to get him off this flip-flop thing, because he's starting to bug us." That's what happened. We had fun, I guess, in that committee. Then we discussed it; we went through with it.

When I talked about the bill on second reading, I had a rather lengthy dissertation.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Obviously you're in a very sour mood tonight, very sour.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You are. You're particularly sour tonight. There seems to be an edge to your heckling. There's an edge to your heckling.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Now I'm getting a lecture from the member for Hamilton East. This bill's a good bill. I've spoken about it at length. I've talked about the necessity of the bill, to create a situation where paramedics can't go on strike. I know it's a good bill. I debated the bill. I went to committee on the bill.

The amendments that were offered by the Liberals were truly embarrassing, to be quite honest. Let me tell you about one of the amendments the member for Hamilton East moved. This is the in-depth logic they've used in their caucus to come up with this wonderful amendment. His amendment at committee was that before you negotiate, before you give notice to negotiate,

before you begin any sort of negotiations, before you get an essential services agreement, the paramedics should be forced to go to binding arbitration. That was an amendment. Can you believe this? He didn't even want the paramedics in the province of Ontario to negotiate.

Mr Gerretsen: Speak on the bill.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm speaking about the committee.

Mr Gerretsen: Speak on the bill.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm speaking about what happened at the committee.

He didn't even want them to negotiate. He didn't want them to get an essential services agreement. His amendment was that they should be forced to binding arbitration right away. Six months before the contract expires, the amendment said, they should go to binding arbitration. I pointed this out to him: who in their right mind would think that a bargaining process would be that six months before your collective agreement has expired everyone should go to binding arbitration? What kind of lunacy is this? This is what the amendment said, I say to the member from Kingston. You should have read it.

Mr Gilchrist: He's not the labour critic. Don't tell us he's the labour critic.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Scarborough East, come to order.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Member from Kingston, I was equally astounded. I was just like you; I was dumbfounded. There isn't any way he could actually mean this.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: His suggestion is that I'm dumb. Not a witty comeback, I will admit, but a comeback nonetheless. He moved that amendment: six months before the contract expires, everybody goes to binding arbitration.

You see, this is the difficulty. You understand what happens at these committee hearings: you get to committee, you put amendments out there that they agree with, that they've asked for in the House, and they vote against them. Then they bring in amendments they haven't given any thought to. The embarrassing part is that you actually put "Liberal" at the top and called it an amendment. You couldn't have spent 25 seconds reviewing it, because anybody would have told you this was an insane amendment. That's what the amendment said: before collective bargaining begins, before the contract expires, six months before an essential services agreement is negotiated, everybody goes to binding arbitration. So now you know, Mr Speaker.

Was there frustration? I was getting a little hot under the collar last week, I admit.

Interjection: You?

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Hon Mr Stockwell: I was. But, you know, I decided they didn't even really look into the bill. They really didn't even want to understand that. They didn't really want to give reasonable amendments. They just wanted to throw these amendments on the table and say, "I made

eight amendments." They didn't care whether any of the amendments made any sense; they were just amendments. That's the frustration I had with respect to this bill.

The other part of the frustration was there wasn't really a good understanding of the bill. They didn't understand it. You had to spend the first part of the committee time explaining that a reasonable right to strike didn't mean just paramedics; it meant the whole bargaining unit. You had to spend an enormous amount of time explaining to them. Seventy-five per cent of the union members would not necessarily be paramedics, but the argument was coming back, "Well, where are you going to find 75% in this place that could have the right to strike if they're paramedics?"

"Well, they're not paramedics."

"Well, then why don't they go to arbitration?"

It was an incredible discussion because they didn't understand the bill, and that's often how the discussion took place.

Mr Gerretsen: Arrogance, arrogance.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No. I'm just relaying to you what happened at the meeting.

I've learned something about the opposition here, too. They don't mind shooting the arrows, but they really don't like catching them. That's another thing I've discovered. They're really interested in criticizing, have you noticed, but the minute you turn around and start criticizing their amendments or their different positions, they all get so touchy. It's all so terrible. "This is not political debate; you're attacking us." You get these huffy little fits going on across the floor. I find this kind of interesting. If you're so prepared to give it, then you'd better be prepared to accept it once in a while.

With the greatest of respect, the amendments you moved at the committee were not well researched, were not well written and didn't really accomplish what you wanted them to accomplish. Really, if you took those amendments out and showed them to the parties you were purporting to represent, they would have said, "This is ridiculous. We don't want to go to binding arbitration six months before our contract comes out."

Mr Gerretsen: We represent all the people.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Not true. The member from Kingston says he represents all the people all the time. I'll tell you, you're probably right, and you'll probably tell everybody anything they want any time. It matters not whether you agree. It matters not whether it's a principle, position or policy of your party, "What do you want to hear?" is the first question of a Liberal who knocks on the door in the election:

"How are you doing? What's an issue that you find affecting you?"

"Education."

"What's your opinion?"

"Funny, me too."

That's Liberal campaigning. I guess this is why I decided this debate on third reading needed to lighten up to some degree.

I took very personally a lot of these issues they brought up. The member Hamilton East got up and railed on about the terrible arbitration process. I listened to him and said, "You know, he's very upset about this, very upset." I went back to the Ministry of Labour and said, "Look, a few members on the other side of the House"—the member from Niagara was one, my friend the member for Hamilton West, whom I have a lot of respect for, commented on the arbitration process, and a few others. I went back to the Ministry of Labour and said, "Look, the members opposite are very, very upset about the arbitration process as it fits in this bill. Why don't we try to change this to see if we can satisfy some of their concerns?" They said, "What are their big concerns?" I said, "Their big concerns are with part (a) and part (c)." There are three parts. "Can we accomplish a proper arbitration process if we take out part (a) and part (c) and just leave in part (b)?" The ministry officials came back and said, "Yes, I think you can." I said, "Then, let's bring an amendment into the committee that takes out part (a) and part (c), because of the issues brought up opposite, and leave in part (b)." That's it; that's all the amendment said. Ask the member for Hamilton East. He was there.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, that's wrong again: (a) and (c) got taken out; (b) was left in. I don't want to correct you again, but that's exactly what it was. So we just left (b) in. You know how depressing it is when you listen to their concerns—the member for Hamilton East always says, "You don't listen," and he goes on and on. So we listened. We bring back an amendment to try to deal with his concerns on it. You know how frustrating it is to say, "OK, we listened to what you said in the House. You had problems with the arbitration process. (a) and (c) were the most problematic. Let's take (a) and (c) out and just leave (b) in," and they vote against it? You've got to wonder, what's the point of listening and bringing in true amendments? I'm not saying you had to vote for the bill. You could still find the bill unacceptable; I accept that. But what's the matter with voting for the amendment, using your mind and voting for an amendment? You could have voted for the amendment and still voted against the bill, because the amendment did—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Don't try and change the subject and wiggle around. The fact of the matter is this: you could have voted for the amendment. I'm suspicious now of exactly what was their motivation. Because the member also said in this House—I think it was the member for St Catharines, and also the member for Hamilton West, for whom I have great deal of respect—"You can't go to an arbitration process, collectively decide they don't have a reasonable right to strike and then force grass cutters and garbage men and so on to go to binding arbitration. They should be severed. Let the paramedics go to binding arbitration and allow those others to go on strike like they normally would."

I heard what you said and I went back to the Ministry of Labour and said, "The opposition seems to make sense

on this one. That's a reasonable argument. They made a good argument. I don't understand why we would force outside workers to binding arbitration when we never have in the past. Can we somehow create a situation where we can sever those unions, let the paramedics go to arbitration and let the outside workers go on strike like they normally would in the past?" The Ministry of Labour officials came back and said, "Yes, we can. It's going to take five or six amendments to the bill, but we can accomplish that if you pass these five or six amendments." I said, "Great."

So there's two issues that I listened to the opposition on, heard their concerns and came back with amendments that satisfied those issues that you brought to the table. Imagine my surprise, imagine my concern, my consternation, when I actually saw the amendments moved and they voted against them—the very amendments they were asking for the week before.

Mr Gerretsen: They were different.

Hon Mr Stockwell: They weren't different. Member for Kingston, I'm doing my best not to challenge your knowledge of this bill and challenge your knowledge of these amendments, because you're an honourable member. I know you to be an honourable member. But I'm very suspicious of how much knowledge you have of the bill or the amendments. I think it's limited at best.

So here I stand in my place today, and I could have gone through the bill, which I did on second reading. I made the defence for it. You don't agree; I appreciate that. I chose to make the arguments today on the kind of bogus consultation stuff that they talk about over there. I chose to make it on how when you do listen and bring in amendments, it doesn't matter. They're not voting for it anyway. Why? I'm not sure.

Mr Gilchrist: They're not sure.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That came back from the back. I don't think they're sure either. I wanted also to point out that they had half a dozen amendments. Three or four of them were terrible—terrible, terrible amendments. They made no sense. They were badly drafted, badly written and didn't accomplish what they purported they wanted to accomplish. That was the frustration I had.

In conclusion, let me tell you there are supporters of the bill out there. They're the municipalities; the municipalities want this bill. They don't want paramedics to go strike. We wouldn't have brought this bill in had it not been for the city of Toronto in the summer of 1999. In the summer of 1999, in the city of Toronto, there was a near strike of the city of Toronto outside workers. I was told personally and it was said publicly by the president of that union that they were going to take the paramedics out on strike with them. Never had that been done before; never had an essential service agreement not been reached.

At that time the suggestion to me at the committee was, "You don't understand the game," and my position at the time was, "Look, this isn't a game. Paramedics going on strike is life and death. If you have unions in the province of Ontario that will threaten, individually, col-

lectively, publicly and in the media that they would take paramedics out on strike, we have no choice as a government. We must declare them an essential service.”

I argued about why they wanted to go to binding arbitration. We all know why they wanted to go to arbitration: to get a better settlement. End of discussion. That’s why they want to go to binding arbitration—that simple. Paramedics get bigger settlements if they go to binding arbitration.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): What’s wrong with that?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Nothing, except that if we can create a system that allows for a meaningful right to strike, what’s wrong with that? Nothing. It keeps the decision-making in the hands of the elected officials at the local municipality. This is a great bill. It’s a good bill. It’s a fair bill. It’s a reasonable bill. I’m proud of this bill, and I’ll tell you municipalities are thankful that this government will pass this bill.

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Mr Agostino: I’m certainly pleased to join the debate. First of all, it’s interesting that with such a serious issue the Minister of Labour would think it’s important enough that he would spend 28 out of 30 minutes providing entertainment. I would hope every paramedic across the province gets a chance to read those comments tomorrow in Hansard to see how seriously the minister and this government have taken this issue, a very serious issue that impacts a lot of people—impacts health care in this province, impacts labour relations, impacts our dealing with paramedics. It is a disgraceful performance on such a serious issue. Let me tell that minister that once he loses the keys to that limo he will also lose that arrogance that he expressed here tonight, and it won’t be too soon for this government and this province.

This is a serious issue. It affects a lot of people, and when we saw this government dealing with this issue we saw the government time-allocate this whole thing at committee, with no public hearings. The consultation was a joke. The minister met the day before it came to committee—that was the extent of the consultation. What an insult to the professionalism of paramedics who are essential to what we do in this province of Ontario.

At the committee, some of the paramedics were upset they didn’t get a chance to speak. One of the members from the committee, from Scarborough Centre, wanted to clear the room. She felt threatened by those paramedics. She felt threatened. She wanted the police in the room. I ask her, and I ask all of you, how many of your constituents, if they’ve had a heart attack or an accident and are at the back of the ambulance, feel threatened by the paramedics? That was a disgrace. The way this government is dealing with paramedics is an insult to their professionalism, is an insult to their value in Ontario. Simply, they are an essential service. They’re no different than firefighters, police officers and nurses across this province. They do a life-and-death service for us. The intervention of paramedics at a car accident can mean the difference between someone living and dying. The intervention of a

paramedic for someone who suffered a heart attack can make a difference between living and dying.

We on this side of the House believe they’re essential. We believe we treat paramedics with dignity and respect. This bill doesn’t do that. Can anyone across the room on the government side of the House believe in their heart of hearts that paramedics are not as essential to Ontarians as police officers and firefighters? Stand up and tell us that. Stand up and tell us they don’t deserve the same treatment when it comes to collective bargaining and their contracts. Have the courage to say that they’re not as essential. Have the courage to say to Ontarians that you don’t believe that the value of paramedics is as important as the value of nurses, firefighters and police officers.

This bill is a sham because it kind of gives them the right to strike and it kind of doesn’t. It kind of gives them arbitration and it kind of doesn’t. It talks about replacement workers. Think about this for a second. You have highly trained, highly skilled paramedics. They may make it that some of them can go on strike and they may bring in some replacement workers. I presume they’ll get a bus driver, maybe, or a truck driver to drive that ambulance.

You don’t understand—the government does not understand—that paramedics work as a team, that they’re essential to the life-saving service they provide in Ontario. To be treated with the contempt that this government has is nothing short of insulting to their dignity, their respect and their value across the province of Ontario.

Let me make it clear for the government: Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals believe paramedics are an essential service. Let me make it clear so the government has no misunderstanding about this: once we form the next government of Ontario, in two years, we will declare paramedics an essential service and we’ll give them the same rights as police officers, firefighters and nurses across Ontario. We will restore the dignity that you have stripped away from them. We will not simply pay lip service to paramedics; we will treat them the way they should be treated.

What this is going to do is drive paramedics out of the province of Ontario. There’s already a shortage here. We have to be competitive with working conditions and wages, and we’re not competitive with working conditions and wages for paramedics, not only in Canada but in the United States. There will be a drain of paramedics and instead of trying to find ways of bringing more paramedics into the province, with better working conditions, better treatment, what do you do to them? You continue your attack on them, the way that for the last six years you’ve attacked working men and women, labour, folks who are hard-working Ontarians. You’ve extended that same back of the hand now to the paramedics.

It’s symptomatic of a bigger problem in health care that you don’t seem to understand. This is going to create a crisis with paramedics in Ontario, unthinkable situations where some of them are going to be out on strike

and some of their colleagues are going to be out working, and somehow they have to work together through this.

We're talking about paramedics here. The government does not seem to understand that it is different. As important as other workers across the province are—if you work in a plant, in a factory of some type, in an institution, your role and your work are important in this province. This government already allows scab labour in those situations. That is wrong. But now, in a situation where you'll pit paramedics against paramedics on something as essential as the life-saving service they provide, this is nothing short of criminal and irresponsible.

This is wrong. The way you've approached this is fundamentally wrong. It is wrong the way you've shut out the paramedics from giving you any input. Who did the minister consult on this? He met with a few representatives the day before the committee hearings—the day before—so he could say he consulted. Is that consultation? Consultation would have been, before he brought it in, to take a draft of this bill, go out there, talk to Ontarians, talk to paramedics, talk to people in the health care field, and come back with a consensus of what they've developed. You didn't do any of that, and paramedics were forced to take some drastic measures.

They're not by nature people who are storming the barricades. They're not by nature radicals. They're folks who are out there committed, dedicated and providing a life-saving service. They were forced to be outside the Premier's office in protest. They were forced into a committee room and not allowed to speak and threatened to have the police called on them because one of the members of the government felt threatened by these evil paramedics who happened to express an opinion different from the government here today.

Mrs McLeod: A security risk.

Mr Agostino: They were, as my colleague from Thunder Bay says, a security risk. They were a real security risk. What is a security risk in this province is not the paramedics but the actions of this government in treating paramedics.

Again, I ask this government, explain to the people of Ontario whether you believe that their role is as important as other essential services. Explain to Ontarians how you can sit here and talk in warm and fuzzy terms, in feel-good language about paramedics but then not treat them with the respect and dignity they deserve. Explain that to Ontarians. Explain to Ontarians how you're going to set up a situation now where you may allow some paramedics to go out on strike and some not, and you will allow paramedics to cross picket lines and bring in replacement workers. Explain to Ontarians how that is helpful to our health care system—the same way you can explain to Ontarians the mess you've made in CCACs across Ontario, in home care. Explain to Ontarians the mess you've made in emergency care and hospital care in Ontario. Explain to Ontarians who must wait hours and hours in ambulances because they can't get into an emergency room the mess you've made there.

This government was warned on many other issues. They were warned about Walkerton and they chose to ignore those warnings. We now see the fallout from that. We see now this government that was too arrogant to listen to anyone else, too arrogant to listen to the professionals, too arrogant to listen to the medical officer of health for Ontario—and seven people paid with their lives because of your arrogance and unwillingness to listen. I suggest that we're creating a similar situation here with paramedics in Ontario. This is a threat to public safety when it comes to their health care, what you're doing here with this bill. It is a threat to paramedics' ability to save lives, to look after people. You don't seem to understand that. You've been warned again. You've been warned by the paramedics. You've been warned by health care professionals across Ontario that what you're doing is wrong. But you chose to ignore those warnings. I hope to God we don't end up with tragedies with regard to this issue here where paramedics cannot properly or effectively respond to an emergency because of the situation this government has put them in.

Ontarians are willing to forgive and forget a lot of things and at times a government's mistakes. Ontarians aren't willing to forget neglect that costs people's lives, as happened in Walkerton. This government had a chance to do this right. They blew it. In two years Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals will fix this up. We will reverse this legislation. We'll make paramedics an essential service. We will treat paramedics with the dignity and respect they deserve. We will treat them like firefighters, like police officers, like nurses. In two years we will undo the damage that this government has done to the dignity and respect and effectiveness of paramedics across Ontario.

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Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This is a time allocation motion, it's 9:35 and it's live at Queen's Park. Folks should understand that we're going to be sitting until midnight tonight. We're going to be here until midnight and we're going to be making the government keep a quorum. We're going to ring the bells if we have to. They're going to be straggling in in various states of dishevelment as the night goes on.

Interjection: Enthusiasm.

Mr Kormos: I hope enthusiasm. It's their responsibility. They want midnight sittings? They've got them, to the hour, midnight, and we'll do it again tomorrow night. You know what? Monday's a statutory holiday but Tuesday isn't. We'll be back Tuesday. I'm fine by that, because there are some things that have to be talked about here in the Legislature.

Mr Bradley: Are we coming back next week?

Mr Kormos: We're coming back next week, Mr Bradley. Don't put the Buick away for the summer. You keep it licensed and insured.

I listened to the Minister of Labour. This is time allocation. What that means is that the government doesn't want third reading debate on this. What it also meant was that the government didn't want meaningful committee

hearings, and there weren't. What that meant was that the committee hearing consisted of a time-allocated, incredibly brief process where by 4 o'clock every amendment had been deemed to have been moved, had to be voted on, couldn't even be read into the record; it was referred to only by its number. There was no debate around the bill on clause-by-clause and there was a lot of concern. I listened carefully to the Minister of Labour's speech and there has never been a more meaningful indictment of late night sittings than that speech delivered by the Minister of Labour this evening.

The Minister of Labour persists in inaccuracies around the impact of the bill and around the motivation behind the government amendments, and the incredible inaccuracy regarding consultation. It's interesting because at the committee hearings yesterday there was row after row paramedics anxious to have an opportunity to be heard, and they were denied that opportunity. Yes, it's quite right, there was a government member—I don't know what riding she's from—Ms Mushinski was going, "Oh, call the police. We need security. There are paramedics here." June 14: the paramedics were sitting there with their stethoscopes and their little black bags with tongue depressors in them and stuff like that, and bandages and gauze—the paramedic stuff they wear. They were sitting there. There were women and men paramedics, and there were old paramedics and young paramedics, and there were short paramedics and tall paramedics, and skinny ones and not so skinny ones, and Ms Mushinski was saying, "Call the police."

The Minister of Labour was sitting up there. I congratulated him. I congratulated the Minister of Labour because back on June 14 the Minister of Labour had stood in his place in this assembly on a point of privilege and protested the assault on what he called his right to come in and out of the building because there were paramedics in the building.

I've got the Hansard right here. The Minister of Labour was frightened by these paramedics in the building. Well, the paramedics were frightened, too. They were frightened that Bill 58 was going to take away any meaningful right to strike and impose upon them an arbitration system that is unprecedented in terms of its one-sidedness, an arbitration regime that is truly arbitrary and lacks any semblance of natural justice, fairness or equity, any of those hallmarks of arbitration that have been developed over the course of what now has been centuries of arbitration.

See, the paramedics were scared. They were scared that they were going to be treated not just as second-class, but as third-class citizens, and they were scared because they hadn't been given an opportunity to speak to anybody in the government. They had tried. They had tried to speak with the Premier. They had tried to speak with the Minister of Labour. They had tried to speak with Tory backbenchers, but Tory backbenchers wouldn't meet with them. Tory backbenchers wouldn't even meet with paramedics who were their own constituents. I know that to be the case because I talked to those paramedics

who were denied opportunities, who were denied appointments with their own MPPs—Tory backbenchers.

The Minister of Labour stood up in this House on June 14 and he was scared. He had to be ushered in and out of the Legislature for fear of being recognized. Why didn't he just put a bag over his head? Afraid, my butt. He was afraid of being confronted by the truth of the matter.

He was afraid of being exposed. Notwithstanding his persistence in this Legislature and outside that he had consulted, he was afraid of being exposed by those paramedics who were prepared to confront him right here on the floor of this hallway and say, "No, you never consulted us. You didn't consult us, you didn't consult our leadership"; not OPSEU, the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union, by way of Leah Casselman, nor CUPE, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, by way of either Sid Ryan or their secretary-treasurer, Brian O'Keefe. That's what the Minister of Labour was afraid of. He was afraid of being exposed for having been less than accurate in his statements that he had consulted with paramedics.

Then he comes to this Legislature and says he was afraid to come in and out of the Legislature for fear of being recognized. Well, he wasn't afraid in the committee room. After the weekend, I congratulated him on having overcome his phobia of paramedics. Whatever therapy or medication he had utilized seemed to have worked, because there he was sitting in a room with them, being as cocky and arrogant as ever and as disdainful of those paramedics as ever. He wasn't about to join opposition members who pleaded with the committee to let those paramedics speak. For a guy who says he's afraid—"Oh, I was afraid"—he was pretty darn provocative, pretty darn cocky, pretty arrogant, pretty disdainful of those women and men—paramedics—sitting in that committee room.

I've learned since that before the day was over, he invited a couple of paramedics to sit down with him. You see, what had happened was, the day before the committee hearings there had been a meeting with Brian O'Keefe of CUPE, some paramedics and the Minister of Labour. The only way those paramedics got that meeting was because they had the courage to bring their grievance to the hallways of this Legislature, where they engaged in a peaceful, lawful protest, where I joined them as a New Democrat, as a member of this caucus, with pride and with the full support of my caucus mates.

These working women and men, these professional public servants, these people who save lives, who protect our welfare on a daily basis under some less-than-perfect circumstances—you know that, don't you, Speaker?—these people knew they were being brushed aside in Harris's privatization agenda, his anti-labour agenda and his overall attack and assault on health care in general. Had it not been for their persistence and their commitment—and I congratulate those paramedics who sat in front of the Premier's office. I congratulate them, I applaud them, I applaud their tenacity, I applaud their courage, I applaud their commitment to their profession and

their commitment to solidarity with their sisters and brothers, because there would have been no meeting—not that the meeting was particularly fruitful or productive.

The Minister of Labour has this peculiar habit of thinking he can out-talk everybody, that the bafflegab will somehow work, that he can razzle-dazzle and people will walk away saying, “OK, I guess you must be right.” But, you see, the paramedics weren’t about to be fooled by the cheap talk of the Minister of Labour, any more than we should be fooled by his cheap talk here in this Legislature, here in this chamber tonight.

2140

It is absurd, it is ridiculous, it is downright repugnant for the Minister of Labour to suggest that his amendments, especially the amendment which breaks up collective bargaining units, not just for the purpose of negotiation—listen, please—but for ever and ever—that’s one of the immediate concerns. I saw the government amendment and I thought, “My goodness.” I consulted with the paramedics and their leadership, with Sid Ryan and Brian O’Keefe, who were in that committee room, and then I confirmed with government sources what the impact of that amendment was supposed to be. Yes, it was supposed to break up collective bargaining units for ever and ever. That in no way, shape or form responds to the legitimate concern about the one-sided phony arbitration scheme that the Minister of Labour and this government are forcing these paramedics into.

The fact is that a whole lot of other public sector workers ought to be concerned too. Much reference has been made to police, firefighters, nurses, any number of essential services that submit to arbitration in lieu of the right to strike. Their fear ought to be that the arbitration scheme in Bill 58 is going to be the new standard, the new benchmark for arbitration for public sector workers here in Mike Harris’s Ontario. It’s called “arbitration” but it doesn’t resemble arbitration in the slightest way, shape or form.

I wish the Minister of Labour had the courage to acknowledge that his scheme—there was a time when I thought he merely hadn’t read the legislation. There was a time when I was prepared to give the Minister of Labour the benefit of the doubt by suggesting that he had merely failed to read the legislation or that he failed to understand the incredible attack on arbitration principles and history and precedent by virtue of the arbitration sections in this bill, and perhaps failed to understand arbitration law in Ontario, hadn’t read the Arbitration Act of Ontario dating back to its consolidation in 1991. Some of my colleagues are very familiar with that Arbitration Act of 1991, which updated the Arbitration Act in Ontario, harmonized it with other jurisdictions and legislated some sacrosanct principles, beginning with *Scott v. Avery* on down.

Let’s take a look at some of the things this bill continues to say with respect to the arbitration—so-called arbitration; we’d better be very careful about how we say that—that’s going to be imposed on paramedics. The bill

makes it quite clear that the Arbitration Act, 1991, does not apply to arbitration proceedings under this act. Not a single section of the Arbitration Act, 1991, applies to arbitrations that paramedics are forced into. Let’s understand that right off the top.

Let’s understand that notwithstanding the withdrawal of paragraphs (a) and (c), this Minister of Labour very much wants to circumvent the recent Ontario Court of Appeal ruling regarding the government’s desire to hand-pick arbitrators very specifically not from traditional panels and/or arbitrators who have an inherent bias. The act, notwithstanding the repeal of the paragraphs before and after, very much retains that power and very much retains the legislative exclusion, the legislative circumvention of that Ontario Court of Appeal ruling, which was yet another court decision in a series of court decisions where this government has lost big time, lost perpetually, lost to the embarrassment of its Attorneys General, past and present, and respective ministers of the crown.

Let’s understand that the bill still says, in the most dramatic way and in a way that is, oh, so contrary to anybody’s understanding of natural justice and fairness and equity, that the arbitrator shall be chosen by the government and—listen, please; this is so important; this is critical; this is the crux of the whole matter—that “No application shall be made, taken or heard for judicial review of or to question the appointment of an arbitrator or replacement arbitrator ... or to review, prohibit or restrain any of the arbitration proceedings.” The government can select, by virtue of this bill, an arbitrator whose bias is so apparent, so obvious. As Howard Hampton has said so many times, Stockwell Day could be the appointed arbitrator, and paramedics, who are going to be subjected to Stockwell Day’s ruling, have no recourse to judicial review.

This is an incredible attack on some very basic rights that developed in Ontario and Canadian law. Some of you will recall *Rand*, among others, and the introduction of judicial review as a statutory right, as a protection against bias, real or perceived, and in the case of paramedics it’s going to be a real bias.

New Democrats oppose this legislation. New Democrats defy this Minister of Labour or any member of that government caucus to identify a single paramedic who ever once, in the history of paramedics and ambulance services in this province, anywhere in this province, put a single Ontarian at risk as a result of a labour dispute—it never happened. I tell you, the Minister of Labour is creating confrontations, is imposing a regime, is challenging those paramedics in such a way that it will generate an instability that we’ve never witnessed before in the delivery of ambulance services in the province of Ontario.

The Minister of Labour should be ashamed, not just for this legislation, but for his efforts to sugar-coat it, and for his efforts day after day to try to suggest in the most inaccurate of ways that he was in any way responsive to paramedics or their unions. Indeed, the day the committee hearings, as I’m told, Mr Minister of Labour had a

couple of paramedics join him in his office. When the president of their union, Sid Ryan, went into that office and said, "No, you don't meet my members without meeting me," the Minister of Labour threw him out. He was afraid: "Oh, I'm afraid." Sid Ryan's just a short little guy, and as capable a union leader as there is, let me tell you. I'm proud of him as his members are. I'm proud of his leadership of CUPE.

So, lo and behold, yesterday what happens? Whether the medication kicked in or whether physiotherapy had been performed during the course of another session, yesterday the Minister of Labour invited Sid Ryan along with Leah Casselman and Buzz Hargrove to his office. Now there are three of them: Sid, Buzz and Leah all together. It's a conspiracy. It's not just a trio; it's a conspiracy. But no, yesterday the Minister of Labour invited Leah, Buzz and Sid to his office, where he purported to lecture them on workers' plans to engage in direct action.

Let me tell you, under this government workers are fighting harder than they ever have been. They're fighting to retain their right to unionize. They're fighting for their lives and their workplaces as this government, under the same Minister of Labour, strips away occupational health and safety legislation that saves lives and as a result of which repealing there will be more injuries and deaths. When I raise in the legislature that in 1999 workplace deaths rose to 200 and the year after that, the year 2000-01, they rose again to 243, the Minister of Labour says, "Oh, those are just silly statistics." More working men and women dying at their jobs, at their job sites, are silly statistics—what an embarrassment for a Minister of Labour. If there was ever a Minister of Labour who ought to resign, it's this one. If there was ever a Minister of Labour who betrayed his obligation to working people of this province, it's this one. If there was ever a Minister of Labour who failed to present the facts in any mode of accuracy it was this one. New Democrats oppose this bill.

2150

Mrs McLeod: This legislation has been a farce from its beginning to what will be its sorry end in passage within the next day. The minister seemed tonight to find entertainment in his own particular performance, in the exercise of his supposedly satirical, sarcastic wit. Unfortunately, it's difficult to "lighten up" as the Minister has suggested, because as my colleague from Hamilton East has said so eloquently, the end of this farce has very serious consequences for public safety and for the public health of the people of this province.

It's difficult to lighten up when you spend a little bit of time with the paramedics, a group of people who have not been politically involved or particularly politically sensitive, I think it's fair to say. I think they would acknowledge that. They didn't know this bill was about to hit them until it was virtually an accomplished fact—the bill was before the House. The paramedics came and said, "Why weren't we consulted? This bill affects us. We're one of the major parties here." The Ontario municipalities had been consulted, at least the official associa-

tion of municipalities had supposedly been consulted, one of the parties to what will be this farcical collective bargaining situation. So the paramedics understandably said, "Why not us? We're the other major party. Why was there no consultation with us?"

I'll tell you: the paramedics of this province, over the last few weeks, have become very sensitized to the political process in this province. The Minister of Labour tonight talks about a democratic process. I wish the paramedics were here. I did turn to the gallery hoping that maybe one of the paramedics would be here so that they could maybe in the hallway tell this Minister of Labour what they think of the democratic process in the province of Ontario, because these paramedics are frustrated, they're angry, they feel as though they have been shut out and, most importantly, they feel as if they have been demeaned, devalued as health care professionals. These are valued health care professionals. They deserved not only consultation; they deserved a reasonable piece of collective bargaining legislation that would allow them to reach agreement with their employers or to have a fair resolution-of-dispute process so that they could indeed carry out the essential work they're doing. Instead, what we've got is the farce that this government has offered to them.

Consultation? Democracy? The Minister of Labour told us repeatedly in committee, when we tried to find out who he had consulted with because it certainly hasn't been the paramedics, "It was an internal group. There were internal committees." I'm the health critic. That's why I'm participating in the discussion of this bill, because I believe it is a health bill as much as it is a labour bill. I said, "What were the views of the Ministry of Health on this piece of legislation?" Believe it or not, there is no recorded view of the Ministry of Health. They seem to have participated in these informal working consultations, these internal consultations, but there is no written record.

I do understand why this Harris government has an increasing sensitivity about their vulnerability when there is any written record of any of their internal discussions. They don't want the public to know what kinds of things they're talking about in their backrooms. But on this piece of legislation, surely there was a role for the Ministry of Health to express this view, the Ministry of Health view, about what this legislation will do to health and to public safety. There was a representative of the Ministry of Health in the audience at the committee hearings. We asked him to come forward; the Minister asked him to come forward. He identified himself as being the project manager for the Ministry of Health on the air ambulance project. Ironically, air ambulance is not at this point affected by this particular bill. The air ambulance paramedics at this point in time are still crown employees; they come under the crown employees act. If that wasn't a pretty clear indication that the government that wants to privatize everything that moves out there, every public service, is about to privatize the air ambulance—because they had the project manager for the air

ambulance project there finding out how this piece of legislation will soon affect air ambulance paramedics because they soon will no longer be crown employees.

Unfortunately, the gentleman who was there from the Ministry of Health was there to find out how air ambulance paramedics would be affected once they are privatized and he wasn't there to present a view of the Ministry of Health as to the impact of this legislation on public health or safety. So, once again, a complete and total farce when it comes to consultations.

Then we had a farce with the amendment process. Now, the minister said he met with the paramedics—finally, the day before the committee was going into clause-by-clause hearings on his bill. The day before, he finally met with the paramedics, and only after they had taken extreme lengths to make their voice heard.

He came in with some amendments which he had the gall to say had the agreement of the paramedics who were filling those committee rooms. When the paramedics, in the only way they could because they'd been given no voice, said, "No, we don't agree with these amendments," they of course had to leave and the committee had to recess, because you wouldn't actually want to find out that the paramedics did not agree. What the minister said in no way described—I was about to use unparliamentary language, Mr Speaker. The words the Minister of Labour used to say that there was agreement from the paramedics to these amendments in no way described the feelings of the paramedics who were present.

The minister tonight has been very critical of the amendments we did bring forward. He says "the parties to this legislation," uses the term "parties." There was only one other party, as far as we know, that maybe was involved. I've talked to municipal representatives in my community and they had no idea what this legislation was or what it would do or how it would impact them, so I'm not sure which municipalities the government consulted with. But he says "the parties," so lets assume there was at least one party he consulted.

He said tonight, "The parties would be amazed if they could see the amendments we brought forward. They'd never agree with those." I'll tell you one party that would agree. The agreements we brought forward were drafted by legal counsel to the paramedics in an attempt to make this very bad piece of legislation at least a little more palatable to them. At the last hour, they were trying to get a piece of legislation that might work for them, but we had that total farce.

We had a farce in terms of this government talking about why they have to bring in the legislation. The minister tonight said, as he has said in committee, "We're going to give paramedics an essential service agreement. They can go on strike but they have to reach an essential service agreement first." He's not prepared to make them an essential service. He said, "We brought in an amendment that would allow paramedics to be severed from the rest of the workers so the paramedics wouldn't be able to go on strike but the rest of the workers would." You heard him say that tonight.

I'm still trying to figure out, from a purely logical perspective, if the paramedics are such an essential service that they have to be severed off from the other workers because it isn't possible for the paramedics to go on strike, why would you not simply declare paramedics an essential service?

The Minister of Labour has also said that in most parts of the province, where there are only paramedics bargaining, they probably wouldn't be able to go on strike because there aren't enough of them to be in any way declared non-essential and allowed to go on strike, so 100% of them would be part of an essential services agreement. So why aren't they an essential service? Why wasn't this government prepared to bite the bullet and recognize that paramedics are an essential service instead of bringing forward this farcical protection, as they claim, of the paramedics' right to strike. There is no meaningful right to strike here. If there, were the government wouldn't make it a further farce by suggesting that when you can find maybe a small handful of paramedics who can go on strike, you would allow the employer to use replacement workers—again a farce. Who is going to replace trained professional paramedics? You can't go out and hire a truck driver, put them behind the wheel of an ambulance, and call them a paramedic. There is no such thing as a replacement worker. There is no meaningful right to strike in this legislation.

Sadly, the minister says, "Why are you arguing about this? We had essential services agreement legislation in Toronto that worked for 30 years." Yet the minister says again tonight that the reason he had to bring in this legislation was because of the breakdown in that very process in the city of Toronto two years ago. So what he's doing is giving the entire province a process which he says broke down and necessitated bringing in this legislation.

So it's a farce in that there's no consultation, a farce in that there is no meaningful right to strike, and a complete farce in terms of the arbitration process in here. When the minister says he made things better, you have to ask, how did it get so bad in the first place? How is it possible that any Minister of Labour could propose to totally control an arbitration process in which he would be free to choose, without recourse to the courts, any arbitrator, whether they had any experience or not. He took out that one clause, but he still is not bound in any way in terms of the kind of arbitrator he appoints or the kind of process. We will never support an arbitration process that gives this government or this minister or any Minister of Labour in this government total control over the arbitration process, because that is not a fair dispute resolution process.

We are opposed to this legislation. We are opposed to the farce of the process. We are opposed to the legislation because it doesn't provide either a meaningful right to strike or a fair dispute resolution process. We are particularly opposed to the way in which our government—this government, not mine; the government that has sway in Ontario right now—would treat our most valued health care workers as people less deserving than

nurses or police or firefighters, whose essential services are clearly recognized and supported through a fair dispute resolution process. That's all we called for, fairness and treating our paramedics with respect and dignity, as other essential health care workers are.

2200

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity to have a few minutes tonight to put some thoughts on the record regarding this legislation that is going to have a very far-reaching and wide-ranging effect on some workers who I think all of us have nothing but tremendous respect for across this province. The work they do touches all of us and our family members on a daily basis in a very serious and important way. Anything we do regarding their work conditions, the way we support them, should be of utmost concern to everybody across this province, most particularly to those of us who have been charged with giving leadership here, who have been given responsibility to give leadership in this place as we act together as the public conscience to decide how we will support and deliver the best possible public services to the people we represent and serve in Ontario.

To listen to the other side on this bill, as in so many other instances, you would think there was a major crisis out there. It is the wont of this government, whether it's real or unreal, to present everything delivered by government in this province as in crisis. The only problem in this instance is that there is a crisis, but it's not the one this government is presenting, not the one this government has designed this legislation to correct. It's one this government is trying to play a smoke-and-mirrors game around. In doing that, they're going to harm, I think irrevocably, a group of people who have over a long period of time given of themselves in a way that is consistently and constantly above and beyond, who put themselves in harm's way, who present themselves in circumstances and situations regarding which many people in this province are appreciative that it's not them having to respond the way these workers do.

In the few minutes I have, I'm going to present the view of this legislation that the workers in this area of professional expertise have. Then I'm going to talk for a few minutes about the real problem this government should be confronting and dealing with, which is the lack of funding and resources for ambulance services across this province and some of the changes they've made that affect communities that now have responsibility for delivering ambulance services, for actually providing those services. That shortage of funding exists across the board in so many areas. If they dealt with that, we wouldn't have to deal with the kind of legislation we have in front of us tonight.

We have here legislation that will take us down the road of diminishing the value we put on the work of these very valuable professionals. We will see them, as we see with teachers and nurses now, leaving the profession in great numbers and heading to other places—the United States of America—where they and their work will be valued in a way that reflects what they do.

Let me read a letter by way of shedding some light. This is from a paramedic, Roberta Scott, in the Toronto area. She says:

“As a level 3 professional paramedic, I am in my 15th year of service with Toronto Ambulance. I am writing to you with some serious concerns about the recent introduction of a bill that will unquestionably have a very negative impact on paramedics across Ontario in regards to labour and contract negotiations. The Ambulance Services Collective Bargaining Act, 2001, introduced on first reading May 17th from the Minister of Labour, Chris Stockwell, intends to guarantee that paramedics become an ‘essential service,’ therefore taking our right to strike away.

“First and foremost, as a professional health care worker and a patient advocate, I do believe that essential service for paramedics is the right thing to do in terms of public safety issues. As it has been long recognized among our emergency services counterparts, police and fire departments, the emergency and life-saving services that we all provide should not be at risk of being withheld under any circumstances.” As my colleague from Niagara said a few minutes ago, not in my history have I ever heard of them doing that in fact. “Having said this, I would like to comment and express my concerns on the way in which our ‘right to strike’ is being withdrawn. As the bill stands now, paramedics have been left with no alternative ability or leverage by which to resolve any potential contractual disputes with our employer. I again point to police and fire services, who gave up their ability to strike, and in a fair exchange, were given means to binding arbitration written into their respective acts. Why have the paramedics of this province not been afforded the same recognition and respect?” I ask the Minister of Labour the same question.

“The job of a paramedic is one of very high stress, with constantly increasing workloads (especially with the horrendous RDC and CCB problems in our hospitals). We work under a physician's licence and perform numerous invasive medical directives. Our responsibility is to make life and death decisions and perform life-saving medical interventions every day. We work under very physically and psychologically demanding and dangerous conditions. Our on the job injury risk is very high, so is our risk of ‘burnout.’ Paramedics have also never been afforded the same recognition of our ‘high risk/public safety oriented job’ that police and fire have. The other two emergency services workers have an early retirement ‘25 years and out’ package. Paramedics do not.

“I have just mentioned a lot of the challenges of our profession, and yet I must also tell you what a very rewarding and gratifying career it is for myself and my colleagues. We have the ability every day that we come to work, to make a huge difference in the lives of many people who are counting on us in their time of greatest need. It is a career we can be very proud of. For 15 years, I have had the privilege of working with a group of professionals who are dedicated, caring and compassionate.

They are excellent at what they do and do it because they truly care about their patients.”

Having said that, why would this government be moving in such a unilateral way to diminish and devalue? That’s what this is about, so they can ultimately, I suppose, like they’re doing with everything else, turn this over to the private sector as well, where the only cost the private sector can manage in a way that brings things down is to reduce the cost of labour.

Let me just talk to you, for the few minutes I have left, about some of the issues being faced by communities as they try to deliver ambulance services, which will indicate to you what this bill is really all about.

This is from Algoma, the emergency medical services land ambulance operation.

“The transfer of land ambulance responsibilities from the Ministry of Health to consolidated municipal services managers has occurred across the province between January 1, 2000, and January 1, 2001. Simultaneous with this transfer, there have been several new obligations imposed by the province related to educational requirements of paramedics, the length of paramedic educational training course, response time standards and use of air ambulance. These decisions have created an environment in which this board cannot attract or retain adequate staff to meet existing service levels.

“On the financial front, the ministry has imposed arbitrary financial caps on base budgets which do not reflect delivery costs. The funding shortfall linked to this arbitrary cap and including the eastern division day crew proposal is estimated at \$142,000 in 2001. At this point that shortfall estimate is based on verbal discussions,” and we will be appealing this.

2210

“The ministry has also taken the position that any alterations of the scheduling regime which existed prior to the transfer date will be considered enhancements. They have verbally indicated that all enhancement requests will be considered in the early fall and be likely assessed related to occurrence volume increases. To date, the board has approved an increase in service by adding a regularly scheduled day crew to handle non-emergency transfers between Elliot Lake/Blind River and Sault Ste Marie/Sudbury. This new level of service, although approved as part of the board’s 2001 budget, was not implemented pending Ministry of Health approval of the full budget. Since May 10 we have been unable to complete 18 non-emergency transfers due to staffing vacancies. The cost of day service to reduce this problem included in above shortfall of \$142,000.”

Just an example, Mr Speaker, and you know, because you represent this area as well. This isn’t about improving services. This is trying to shoehorn a program as essential as ambulance services into a reduced budget. That’s what it is about.

Mr Bradley: I feel compelled to speak after the performance of the Minister of Labour earlier this evening, where he was chastising anybody and everybody and putting on an entertaining performance—entertaining, at

least, for members of the government caucus. But here we are dealing with a very serious piece of legislation which, I think, is robbing people of their right to unfettered arbitration when the right to strike is taken away. You have one of two choices. You either say to people, “You have the right to strike; that is, to withdraw your services,” or, “You don’t have the right to withdraw your services. You don’t have the right to strike.”

Paramedics in this province recognize that they provide an essential service. They’re prepared to be declared an essential service. Not everybody in this province is prepared to do that. In return, they would like the opportunity to have unfettered arbitration so they’re not left in a bill which leaves them halfway in a strike and halfway out of a strike with so-called replacement workers able to come in and do their jobs or keeping a few people on the job. They say, “Look, we understand we are an essential service.” Anybody who knows anything about the work paramedics do in this province recognizes they are an essential service. But this is part of the government’s whole approach to ground ambulances in this province.

The member for Thunder Bay noted that it appears they want to move to privatize air ambulance services—because to these people anything that’s a public service is not good—just as they want to privatize those who are now delivering a service testing people for driver purposes. What they did was create a crisis there. They made sure there was a crisis: people had to wait a long period of time, there wasn’t enough staff, not enough financial resources to meet the new requirements under licensing, and then people are prepared to accept anything. By gosh, we know how exasperating it was, and, of course, then they want to privatize that service, which we are opposed to.

We have this situation with paramedics in the province. They’ve tinkered with the bill a little bit and said, “See, we listened to somebody.” The tinkering really did not meet the requirements of those who are looking for justice under a piece of legislation of this kind.

It reminds me of their approach to the CCACs in this province: they just bulldoze over people. CCACs are the community care access centres that you have in your community and I have in my community. They’re drastically underfunded at this time. They’re having to cut back services, and you have to wait longer and longer for those services in the field of medical care. We have another instance in medical care where a crisis is being created with the CCACs. People are now calling our constituency offices—as they will with this, as this bill passes—and saying, “We cannot get the service.” But what the government knows is that people will become angry with the community care access centres and forget it is underfunding by the provincial government that is causing the problem. That is what’s causing the problem.

As they bounce people out of hospitals quicker and sicker, these people need care in a home setting or a nursing home setting. Often those nursing homes are not equipped to deal with the very heavy care of patients immediately coming out of hospitals. Those people are

often transported to those nursing homes or to their own homes using the services of our paramedics. We recognize that in the service paramedics provide, they're often the first people on the scene, and that the difference between life and death can be the medical procedures that are performed by paramedics on the way to hospital or at the scene of an accident or of a serious illness at a home. They have two positive effects—one is to save lives, and the second is to prevent a situation from getting worse and being debilitating for a lifetime.

We have a doctor shortage in our part of the province, as you probably do in your part of the province, a dire shortage of family physicians. People can't get those physicians. Some of the services they get are from the paramedics themselves. Often people can't get the services of a physician because physicians are overloaded with patients, and they end up calling an ambulance trying to go to the hospital. Often the response time isn't what people would like. Why is that? Again, underfunding of the service in years gone by. Our municipality, the regional municipality of Niagara, has now taken over and is trying to improve that service but, again, at a cost to the local municipality. People will write a letter to me and say, "Isn't it awful. If only we got rid of those politicians on these councils, we'd have all this money and my taxes wouldn't go up." Of course, that's not the reason. The reason is that the provincial government has downloaded responsibility for land ambulances on to the backs of municipalities, which now have to assume a very onerous cost.

I have people in the field of health care who call about Visudyne, which is a treatment for people who are suffering from macular degeneration. They have to pay large amounts—what would it be, Lyn, \$1,800 to \$2,000 per treatment? It has to come out of their own pockets. This is in a province that claims to provide universal health care to people. Meanwhile, in the background of all this—and a lot of people have forgotten this—we have a provincial government that in this budget is giving a gift to the corporate sector, to corporations in this province, of \$2.2 billion in tax cuts. If you look at the proportion of taxes paid in Ontario by the corporate sector today, compared to what it was even a dozen years ago, as a proportion it's way down, and individuals are paying far more.

Dr Richard Schabas, the former medical officer of health of Ontario, at the Walkerton inquiry on Monday described an unbelievable situation where the Premier said he didn't want to hear from him about the matter of downloading health care services to the local level. When Dr Schabas started to speak to the Premier, despite the fact somebody told him the Premier didn't want to hear from him, and warned him of the dire circumstances that could result from the downloading of health care services to the local municipality, the Premier just turned away and ignored him. I think one can draw the conclusion that as a result we have a circumstance such as Walkerton, a considerable risk to the people in the province. Dr Schabas was kind enough, committed enough and con-

cerned enough to try to tell the Premier of this province, who was being as bullheaded as he usually is in these situations, what he should be doing, what would be good for the province and what is essential for the people of the province, and the Premier simply ignored him. That is most unfortunate.

In this whole field of health care, then, we see the government creating a crisis, as it did in education. Why is that crisis being created? It's being created so people will someday, in exasperation, accept what they shouldn't accept, which they normally would not accept, and that is the privatization of many health care services and, in addition to that, a two-tier health care system where the wealthiest people in this province are able to buy services over and above those which are available to the general public.

There's concern about this happening in ambulance services in this province, particularly as the member for Thunder Bay tells me now, with the move toward privatization, a set-up for privatization.

So we have yet another piece of legislation today. The member for Sudbury, the member for Thunder Bay and you, Speaker, from Manitoulin, have talked about a great concern about the two-tier health care system as it relates to people who have to travel to get medical care. So I think we're very justified in the opposition in opposing this legislation once again.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): By order of the House, the debate is now ended. I am required now to place the question.

Mr Stockwell has moved Bill 58. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I have a letter from the chief government whip which asks that we defer this vote until deferred votes tomorrow afternoon.

2220

BROWNFIELDS STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LES FRICHES CONTAMINÉES

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 5, 2001, on the motion for second reading of Bill 56, An Act to encourage the revitalization of contaminated land and to make other amendments relating to environmental matters / Projet de loi 56, Loi visant à encourager la revitalisation des terrains contaminés et apportant d'autres modifications se rapportant à des questions environnementales.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate? The member for Nickel Belt.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Thank you, Mr Speaker, there's nowhere else I'd rather be on a Tuesday night at 10:30.

Let me begin by saying there are probably three points I want to make with respect to Bill 56. Let me begin by making clear that I believe the purpose of the bill has been outlined by the minister as being an act that is supposed to kick-start environmental cleanup and renewal of brownfields, and that will then develop healthier, safe and cleaner communities.

The minister made it very clear in his opening remarks that brownfields exist in many communities. He said, and I'm quoting from page 1074, "Brownfields exist in many communities throughout Ontario, often on lands that were previously home to chemical plants, dry cleaning stores, gas stations, railway yards or factories" etc. He made it really clear that there are many communities that have brownfields. I want you to remember this because it will become very important when I talk about who pays for development.

The intention, as I see it, is to set out both by legislation and by regulation how brownfields will be cleaned up in both a responsible and an environmentally sound manner. At the same time, the purpose of the bill is also still to allow the Ministry of the Environment to intervene where there are emergency environmental issues or to take some action against polluters. So there are a number of intentions that are outlined in the bill. The government is going to set rules around cleanup of sites, rules around liability with respect to future environmental orders, rules regarding the planning process to try and expedite some of this cleanup, rules regarding how the planning process will be put in place and some rules as well that are supposed to set out how municipalities can use tax relief as an incentive to private owners and developers who want to take on this remedial work on brownfields.

The point really is that the government wants to put in place some rules around tax relief, because this same government has absolutely no intention whatsoever of giving a single cent to the many communities that have brownfields to actually try and redevelop those properties, first to clean up those properties and then to try and redevelop them. The important question, which the government has yet to deal with, is, where is the money going to come from? If this brownfields redevelopment is a priority of the government—as I read through the comments of the minister, you would have to take from his comments that it allegedly is a priority for this government—why is it that the government has no provision anywhere in the bill, nor is there anything noted with respect to regulations, that the government intends to provide one red cent to municipalities to allow these cleanups to occur?

The government has been very specific. The government has allocated money for cleanup only for the Toronto waterfront project. That's it. The government has been very clear about that. That's how far their com-

mitment to brownfields remediation work goes: Toronto waterfront development, period, point final.

It was also very clear, as I read through the minister's comments and the comments of the Conservative backbench, that there doesn't seem to be any way for municipalities to access SuperBuild to allow them access to some financial resources to deal with the cleanup of contaminated sites in their communities.

So we've got a government that's only prepared to do something limited in the way of the Toronto waterfront, nothing with respect to SuperBuild, and all of the onus and the obligation seems to fall on municipalities, which are now expected to provide some form of temporary tax relief to private owners as an incentive to get them to do the cleanup. The government's argument or rationale in the minister's statement is that if municipalities do provide that temporary tax relief, they will get that money back, because as the property is cleaned up and redeveloped, then the property value will increase and property taxes will increase, and so the municipality will recover any of the money it would have lost with the initial temporary tax relief.

That's all well and good if there is a private owner involved who actually owns a site that needs to be cleaned up, because I guess that would act as an incentive for a private owner to do just that. But I think many of these sites have actually come into the possession of municipalities through tax default. The owner is gone. He's disappeared and left the problem behind, left the site behind. The municipality has inherited that problem.

Where is the municipality going to get the money to do the cleanup to make that property attractive so that a private developer will purchase it and, hopefully, build housing or something else on the site. I submit to you that municipalities don't have the luxury of having some extra cash around to clean up some of these sites. You have to remember that this is the same government that downloaded the cost of public transit, ambulance services, public health, assessment services, child care, libraries and highways running through communities, all on to the backs of municipalities and property taxpayers in those municipalities. That download of services has not been revenue-neutral. It's not revenue-neutral in my community and it's not revenue-neutral in the city of Toronto. There are many other members in this House who could speak tonight to the fact that this download of government services on to municipalities has been anything but revenue-neutral.

Now the government comes forward with a bill to help clean up contaminated sites in our communities and the government wants to download the cost of doing that, too, on to municipalities and on to the backs of property taxpayers in our communities. I say to the government, you folks had \$2.3 billion to give away as a tax break to your wealthy corporate friends in our most recent budget, and you come forward with this bill that is allegedly a priority, to make our communities healthier and to promote economic development in our communities, and you don't have one red cent to help communities do just

that. Where's your priority when it comes to healthier, environmentally sound communities?

I say that by the mere fact that the government doesn't offer one red cent to municipalities to undertake this work, the priority is clear. It isn't a priority to clean up our communities. It isn't a priority of this government to deal with these contaminated sites. I regret that. But it must be said that if the government doesn't want to ante up some money to allow municipalities to make this happen, then it's not going to happen in the majority of cases, because many municipalities that have been left with these sites because the owners who contaminated the sites have disappeared, will not have funds available to deal with this cleanup.

2230

The other problem is that the Ministry of the Environment is given many powers under this legislation, all well and good because if you're going to clean up these sites you want to make sure that's done in an environmentally sound manner. The problem is—and we have seen this over and over again during the course of this government—that the Ministry of the Environment has suffered significant hits in terms of its operating budget and its staff. This is a ministry that has lost 700 people, most of them inspectors, the very same people you would need to be part of the process of the remedial work to clean up these contaminated sites. I think we are going to find ourselves in a position of work going forward and then not enough inspectors from the Ministry of the Environment to ensure that that remedial work is undertaken in an environmentally sound manner.

We set up a false hope among people out in our many communities that we are going to do something about these sites, and then we discover that the government doesn't want to ante up the money to allow the remedial work to take place, and if a private developer does have the money and uses a tax break from the municipality to carry out the work, there won't be the Ministry of the Environment staff available to monitor that work. It is very clear that we need public hearings on this bill. I would urge the minister, after we get through second reading, to commit to that very thing.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm very happy to make comments this evening on Bill 56 to do with brownfields. I'd like to thank the member from Nickel Belt for her comments to do with this legislation. I see it as very important legislation, especially for my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. In Parry Sound we have some prime waterfront locations that are indeed brownfields, and I see this legislation as being something that may result in their development. The member for Nickel Belt was questioning whether the tax benefit that is being created so the municipalities can give a tax credit toward the fix-up of the property is going to work. I think if you're the municipality and you have property that's abandoned, that's not currently being used for anything, obviously if it gets developed, no matter how much it costs to clean up that property, eventually you'll get some benefits. So of course it makes sense.

If the municipality owns the property, this legislation makes it much more likely that they can sell the property to a developer who can then clean it up. That is certainly a benefit as well.

I can see in my riding that it is going to be beneficial toward cleaning up and developing the Parry Sound waterfront, where there are some prime unserviced waterfront properties that have a great potential for the future. I see this as valuable legislation that is going to be a benefit to my riding.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I know this government doesn't like the Toronto Star. I'm just recalling an editorial in the Toronto Star which pointed out a number of problems with this legislation. Specifically, it was Dianne Saxe, who was formerly with the Ministry of the Environment, who listed a number of problems. I hope the minister can persuade his colleagues to send this to committee as a result.

Let me deal with one problem with the whole area of planning. I think that brownfields can be used in the right circumstances, but what's happening with municipalities now in terms of urban sprawl is, they're intimidated by the fact that the developer always threatens to go to the Ontario Municipal Board. Unfortunately, the Ontario Municipal Board has been stacked with Tory appointees who are pro-development. You listen to some of these municipal councillors who say, "Look, we don't want to approve this development. It takes up a lot of farmland. It takes up a lot of good environmental land. It takes up parkland. But if we don't approve it, the Ontario Municipal Board is going to approve it." The developer has already said he's heading to the Ontario Municipal Board unless the local council approves it.

What is required in this regard—and this minister may have some input in this regard, I hope. I know it is not his ministry, but I hope they start appointing people to the Ontario Municipal Board who aren't interested in seeing every last square centimetre of farmland in this province, including in the Niagara Peninsula and other places, paved over and left in a circumstance where you no longer have that extremely valuable farmland.

I hope the government will address the concerns expressed by Dianne Saxe, formerly of the Ministry of the Environment. I think it would be advantageous not only for the opposition and people outside but for the minister himself to have this go to committee, so he could have the kind of input that's necessary to make changes to the bill that would benefit and improve the legislation.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The riding of Niagara Centre, with municipalities like Welland and Thorold, is very much affected by this bill and the policy issues it purports to speak to. These are old industrial communities, industrial sites that go back, heck, 120, 130 years. Acres of land, I suspect, that today would be identified as brownfield lands have already been developed because of the lack of consideration or the failure to consider so many of these things.

We've got the Union Carbide site in Welland now, acres and acres—again, I'm just speaking with more than

a little bit of hyperbole—where I suspect there are at least some spots where the PCBs are three feet down, if not deeper. That's what happens to these industrial sites. Those that we can identify now—Union Carbide has been abandoned by Union Carbide. The American-based company pulled out. After Mike Harris got elected they were gone—325 workers without jobs, 325 families without incomes—acres and acres, adjacent to the old Welland Canal, and the destiny of so much of that acreage is that it simply lapses, by virtue of unpaid taxes, into municipal ownership.

I've got to tell you, you've downloaded and downloaded on municipalities like Welland, Thorold, Pelham, St Catharines, every single city, town and village in this province. I'm sorry, they don't have the financial resources to undertake the remediation that's going to be required to turn this land into developable property, even for industrial usage. The bill, without that sort of financial support for municipalities, is hollow.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): The member spoke well.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Ms Martel: The situation is this: the government says this is a priority. Actually, the minister in his comments went on at great length to say they had consulted with a number of people and a number of organizations to get us to the point where we are today. What I'm saying to the government is this: if this is a priority, if you were really serious about ensuring that contaminated sites in many communities across the province are finally dealt with, both to protect the environment and then to have some economic development, then put your money where your mouth is. You had \$2.3 billion worth of tax cuts in the most recent budget and nothing allocated to this initiative. The government has made it very clear that the only contaminated site they're going to deal with has to do with regeneration of the Toronto waterfront. That's it and that's all.

I think it is grossly unfair to dump the responsibility for brownfield redevelopment on to municipalities, and that's what you're doing. You want municipalities to offer some kind of tax incentive or tax relief to private owners in the hope that they will undertake the development, redevelop the property, get a better property, higher taxes and recoup their money. But for municipalities that have come into possession of contaminated sites because the owners have fled or disappeared, those municipalities will not have the cash available up front to do the remedial work, to make that parcel then attractive to a private developer to carry on with other development, be it housing, industrial-commercial etc. You're putting them in an untenable position where they don't have the cash up front to do what they surely want to do as well.

I say to the minister, rethink this, put some money on the table and then this initiative might actually work.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Here we go again. It would appear that once again the Liberals have decided to work with the Tories in order to achieve whatever it is they're trying to achieve, because here we find ourselves again, another evening when it's only New Democrats who are speaking to bills.

I appreciate the debate time. I've got to say to my friends in the Liberal caucus and to my friends in the Tory caucus that I really like the idea having some extra time to be able to speak on this bill because it is a bill that affects I think a lot of communities across Ontario. I just want to say that we're a very small caucus, but we're here; 80% of our caucus members are here. We're here to debate the bills of the House. We're here to do our job to make sure we do due diligence and scrutiny to what is brought before this Legislature. We take our responsibilities seriously, and I'm proud as a New Democrat we do so.

I want to say a couple of things in regard to this bill. I generally support the direction the government is going in on this bill. I don't want to always come into this Legislature and say that we should oppose everything the government does because it's the government. However, there are a couple of things that are going on around this Legislature that we're not going to allow this bill speedy passage. I think the government has to understand that we are as New Democrats making a point and we're allowing a—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Oh, really, Mr Speaker? As a matter of fact, Mr Speaker, I would move at this point adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Bisson has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2242 to 2312.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Bisson has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour will stand and remain standing until they are counted.

All those opposed will stand and remain standing until they are counted.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 22; the nays are 7.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon

The House adjourned at 2313.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

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Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
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		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Vaughan-King-Aurora	Vacant

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

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

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Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
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Leona Dombrowsky, Bert Johnson,
Tony Martin, Frank Mazzilli,
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Toby Barrett, Marcel Beaubien,
Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Tina R. Molinari
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Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Vacant
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Caroline Di Cocco, Jean-Marc Lalonde,
Margaret Marland, Jerry J. Ouellette,
R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N. Tascona,
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John Hastings, Shelley Martel, Bart Maves,
Julia Munro, Richard Patten
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**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et des projets de loi d'internet privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Garfield Dunlop,
Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy, Morley Kells, Frances Lankin,
Ted McMeekin, Bill Murdoch, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

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