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of Ontario
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 27 November 2001

Mardi 27 novembre 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 27 November 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 27 novembre 2001

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): Last night in Toronto hundreds of tenants crammed into the city council chamber to take part in a forum that focused on the city's affordable housing crisis. The forum was told that the rental housing crisis is killing elderly people on fixed incomes. Some seniors are paying 90% or more of their income on rent, including a 77-year-old woman with a monthly income of \$1,178 who pays \$1,032 on rent. That leaves her with \$146 for all of her other monthly living expenses.

The plight of tenants has never been worse, with some tenants on fixed incomes facing double-digit rent increases. Across the city, 73,000 households are facing increases above the approved provincial guidelines for rent increases this year. This is effectively resulting in economic eviction for people of low and modest incomes. Evictions in Toronto are on the rise, averaging 60,000 evictions a year. The current vacancy rate in Toronto is 0.9%, which is far below the 3% vacancy required to have a competitive market.

These numbers come days before the federal and provincial housing ministers meet in Quebec City to try to agree on a national program to help solve the country's desperate shortage of affordable housing. The housing ministers will meet on Friday to try to come to an agreement on the proposed federal program that offers \$680 million over four years to help create affordable housing. This money is supposed to be matched by an equal amount from the provinces. It is time for both levels of government to come to an agreement to help address the issue of affordable housing, which is the most serious problem facing tenants today.

NIAGARA HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It was a very exciting day for the St Michael Mustangs on Thursday, November 15, as they defeated the Lakeport Lakers 21-7 in St Catharines for the division II high school football championship. This was St Michael's first year back in

division II football after playing as a division I team in the past.

Celebrations were held on both the Lakeport field and back at home field. A special tribute was held for the late wife of Mustang's coach Tim Rogers, who died after a long and courageous battle with cancer.

Other proud coaches of the St Mike's Mustangs include Dom Scozzafava and Carl Cook.

Although they didn't win their championship game of the 2001 zone 3 junior championships, the St Michael's Mustangs junior girls' basketball team should be applauded for their great efforts.

Also, the Westlane Spartans volleyball team tried their best but lost in the SOSSA championship finals. They too should be applauded for their hard work and efforts.

Finally, I'd also like to make mention of my alma mater, the A.N. Myer Marauders junior boys' volleyball team, coached by Joanne Thomson, whose mom happens to be my godmother. They recently won the southern Ontario championship. Great job, Myer.

As a part-time basketball coach myself, and a huge Niagara Falls high school sports fan, I'm proud of all of the local school teams who get out there and give it their all.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Frustration. Frustration in Sault Ste Marie, Rankin, Garden River, Echo Bay, St Joseph Island, Desbarats and across the north shore of Lake Huron. For decades now, the people east of Sault Ste Marie on Highway 17 have been awaiting the completion of four-laning between the city of Sault Ste Marie and the four lanes that presently exist at Echo Bay.

Last week, my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and I heard first-hand of the frustration from area residents. A provincial facilitator has been unable to resolve all the issues surrounding this project. The federal government, in an unprecedented and meaningful fashion, has put \$700,000 on the table to make this provincial project work.

In my representations to the Minister of Transportation, he has given me an undertaking for completion of the four-laning by the year 2008. That is clearly unacceptable. It is clearly too long. People and families continue to be put at risk at this bottleneck. Tragedies continue on this dangerous and unsafe section of the TransCanada Highway. The minister must appoint a mutually acceptable arbitrator to resolve all outstanding issues with the city of Sault Ste Marie and the Batche-

wana First Nation at Rankin. The funding and construction of this important section of crown highway must be fast-tracked and the people of Algoma, Sault Ste Marie and indeed all motorists must be finally assured of the swift completion of this highway.

DURHAM ACCESS TO CARE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to advise my colleagues of the important work of Durham Access to Care in my riding of Durham and, indeed, the entire region of Durham. Statistics tell us that over 1,000 residents of Durham received services during the month of September, but I prefer to think of these individuals, the people behind the numbers. These are the children, men, women and youth who recover at home after hospital visits. They are senior citizens who need support that makes home living more comfortable for them. This important agency helps people recover and maintain their health close to their family, their community and friends.

I'm pleased to share with the House some of the important milestones that Durham Access to Care has achieved. These include: a five-star rating for hospital-community care access relations in the OHA hospital report card—only two five-star ratings were awarded in all of Ontario; successful accreditation through the Canadian Council of Health Services; and completion of a community health forum recently with over 150 participants.

Through a question to the House, I will bring to the attention of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care some of the specific concerns MPPs have discussed in a recent meeting with Durham Access to Care. We look to this outstanding agency for experience and input on important priorities of care in the home. I'd like to congratulate the dedicated staff of Durham Access to Care, CEO Janet Harris, board volunteer president Bill Botshka, as well as past chair Barb Hiemstra. I thank those volunteer board members and the agency for the success and service they provide to our community.

NURSES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): A shocking study was released yesterday by the Canadian Institute for Health Information. The report shows that nurses in Canada are 50% more likely than the average employee to miss work because of injury or illness. Shocking as this finding is, the fact that stress, burnout and physical injury are affecting nurses should come as no surprise, certainly not here in Ontario.

Ontario nurses have been pleading with this Tory government to understand the reality of their working conditions. Just look at where nurses work: many of them work in acute-care hospitals—at least, they do when they are not being laid off because of budget cuts. It was just over five years ago that 10,000 nurses were fired. Many of them left nursing or left the province, and now we face a nursing shortage.

Yet despite the need for nurses, hospitals have no idea of what their budgets will be and are still not hiring full-time nursing staff. Some 60% of nurses are hired on a part-time or casual basis. They have no job security, yet they are being called in for far more overtime than anyone should be expected to do.

Nurses work in long-term-care facilities, but there are so few nurses hired there, because of budget restraints, that a nursing home can actually be a physically dangerous place for both the vulnerable elderly person and for the nurse.

In home care, nurses are being asked to take on more and more patients, without the time to provide adequate care.

In 1998-99, \$39 million was spent in Ontario on sick time for nurses; \$17 million went to overtime; \$19 million was spent on replacement for nurses off sick. It would be far better for patients and for nurses to spend those millions on better working conditions for Ontario's nurses.

1340

TRANSFER PAYMENTS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I draw the attention of government members to the fact that a quick read of today's Hamilton Spectator provides a pretty good snapshot of what exactly is happening in communities as a result of your giving away billions of dollars to the very wealthy and to corporations in this province at the expense of transfer payments and other public services.

First of all, the front page talks about the mayor vowing food checks, where they're going to jump on the issue of restaurant inspections in Hamilton, much like we saw happen here in Toronto. But let's keep in mind that this is a result of the downloading that this government placed on municipal councils like Hamilton, where they've been forced to cut in places that don't obviously generate headlines right away but down the road affect the quality of life of citizens. I can't think of a better example than something like this.

Next, "Public Schools Need \$20 Million in Repairs." You've offered us \$6.8 million. We need \$20 million just to keep the existing schools in the kind of shape that most of us would accept for our children to be in. But you haven't given them the money because you've given it all away in tax cuts to the corporations and the rich.

Lastly, Ken Mitchell talks about the "Erosion of the City's Tax Base Must Be Stemmed." We're already boxed in, in terms of our inability to be competitive, based on our tax rate, and yet how do we cover off public services that you don't provide the funding for any more?

HOSPITALS IN PEEL

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Brampton got good news last week. Brampton is one of Canada's fastest-growing cities, and Peel region is

growing by 20,000 people each year. We all know that the hospitals of Peel are straining to carry this growing and aging population. That is why we were all so thrilled last year when Minister Witmer announced a new hospital in my riding at Bramalea Road and Bovaird Drive.

So we had the issue of the old hospital site. It is old and worn out, but it's an important part of the economy of downtown Brampton, and one hospital will not be enough for such a large city.

I was very pleased last week when we got word that the old hospital, Peel Memorial on Lynch Street, will be staying open. Our two hospitals will serve the needs of my community into the next decade. As part of the William Osler group, they will take cases from all over the western GTA. In his announcement, Mr Clement said, "The Ministry of Health has recognized Brampton is big enough, and mature enough, for two hospital sites." The minister has shown a strong commitment to proceed with the new hospital and has indicated that he would like to see a shovel in the ground by spring or summer next year. We're looking forward to that continued support and commitment.

This is a proud day for Brampton. I congratulate the government for planning ahead, for delivering on its promises and for ensuring access to hospital care for Bramptonians today and in the future.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): "I don't know how anyone can tell you they're going to do tax cuts next year, looking at a \$4-billion or \$5-billion deficit.

"I'd like to say that but I don't know how I can say it and then turn around and look you in the eye and say I won't have a deficit. In my mind, you can't square that circle."

You must be wondering who made that statement. Was it Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty, Liberal finance critic Gerry Phillips or any member of the Liberal caucus? Was it one of dozens of economists who have said that for years? It could have been, but it wasn't. That bold statement came from none other than Labour Minister Chris Stockwell.

Too bad Stockwell couldn't have convinced his ideological revolutionaries in the Harris government of this wisdom before they borrowed billions of dollars to pay for the tax cuts in the first term, tax cuts that added \$22 billion to the provincial debt under the Harris regime.

Stockwell must be embarrassed to see his boss, Mike Harris, trying to convince a skeptical public that he wants more money from the federal government for health care. A sharp guy like Stockwell understands that Harris wants the money to pay for his ill-timed and ill-advised tax cuts, not for health care. Stockwell, like Ontario Liberals, understands that his government has a choice: either health care or tax cuts. Come on, Chris, tell Mike and the gang that he has all the money he needs for health care

and to balance the budget, if only he will abandon his tax gifts to the rich and the powerful.

PLANT CLOSURES

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): Last week I met with three members of Stratford city council, along with union representatives and employees from Canadian Fabricated Products in Stratford. Two months ago their US parent company, Johnson Controls, announced they would be closing their Stratford plant this December, putting 400 people out of work. Westcast Industries also announced recently that they are closing their Stratford plant. In that case, most of the employees will be offered jobs in other Westcast plants in southwestern Ontario.

In places like Stratford, these plant closings have a major impact on workers, families, the local economy, social services and the community in general. Such closings raise the important question of what the role of government should be in these types of situations. These closings also demonstrate the importance of all three levels of government providing an economic climate for businesses to grow, prosper and compete.

This government believes that strengthening Ontario's economic fundamentals continues to be the best strategy. This includes sound fiscal management, keeping the province's expenditures under control, cutting taxes and removing barriers to investment in the private sector.

The closings of Canadian Fabricated Products and Westcast Industries have hit Stratford hard and I want to thank my colleagues the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and the Minister of Labour for their assistance. I encourage all three levels of government to work together to create the economic conditions so that communities like Stratford can retain their existing businesses and attract new ones.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to seek unanimous consent for all members who have the white ribbon campaign flag on today to be able to wear it. This is a campaign led by men to seek a way to eliminate violence against women. It's an important campaign run internationally and I would be grateful if all members would agree to this.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard a no.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Oh, one member didn't hear it. Would you say it again for the member, please, on a point of order? The member again on unanimous consent?

Mr Gravelle: I'd like to seek unanimous consent to wear the white ribbon emblematic of the white ribbon campaign, a campaign led by men to eliminate violence against women.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed. I thank the members.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 90, An Act to promote the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste / Projet de loi 90, Loi visant à promouvoir la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Pursuant to standing order 72(b), the bill is therefore ordered for second reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND SOCIAL POLICY

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice and social policy and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 87, An Act to regulate food quality and safety and to make complementary amendments and repeals to other Acts / Projet de loi 87, Loi visant à réglementer la qualité et la salubrité des aliments, à apporter des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois et à en abroger d'autres.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 15, 2001, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

UNIVERSITY OF ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR L'INSTITUT UNIVERSITAIRE DE TECHNOLOGIE DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs Cunningham moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to establish the University of Ontario Institute of Technology / Projet de loi 139, Loi visant à constituer l'Institut universitaire de technologie de l'Ontario.

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

The minister for a short statement?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I'll do it later.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

UNIVERSITY OF ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): Our government has made great strides in improving the post-secondary sector for the people of Ontario.

For example, increasing choices and opportunities for students at all levels of study is a priority for our government. To date, we have increased the capacity of our colleges and universities to address the expected enrolment growth. Through SuperBuild, we have launched the largest expansion of Ontario colleges and universities in more than 30 years. The government is spending over \$1 billion to create new spaces for future generations. In addition, to ensure that there will be faculty and resources to support these new students, we are increasing operating grants by \$293 million over three years.

We are also working to ensure that post-secondary programs are meeting the needs of today's students and employers. That is why we have provided \$228 million to launch the access to opportunities program to create an additional 23,000 spaces in high-demand programs such as computer science, programs the students really want.

To help students and parents plan, we also froze tuition to 2% per year for most programs over five years. This means that students will know the cost of their chosen program's tuition for the next four years.

The list goes on, and today we take another step.

At the opening of this legislative session, Premier Harris reiterated our government's focus on strengthening the economy. One of our government's priorities is to address skills shortages and ensure that Ontario boasts the skilled workforce necessary to attract investment and jobs. Ontario's workforce is facing long-term challenges, with more people retiring from work than the number of new workers starting their careers. As Ontario's workforce retires in record numbers, the availability of new recruits with the skills to enter the workforce will be increasingly in demand. These new young employees will need a wider range of post-secondary education choices, and in some cases a new kind of educational choice, to acquire the skills they need.

Durham region is one of the fastest-growing areas in Ontario. To support this growth and plan for the future, the people of Durham have been working to expand the region's economic base and aggressively court knowledge-based industries. For some time now, the people of Durham have been telling our government that a

university built on the strong foundation of Durham College is necessary to support their goals. A university would serve as an anchor institution to provide a skilled and trained workforce, along with the necessary research and know-how needed by the Durham region to secure its economic future.

Our government has also heard from other stakeholders that the time is right for more choice and flexibility in post-secondary education. The Ontario Jobs and Investment Board report recommended that post-secondary institutions should be stronger partners in regional economic development.

In addition, students, parents and employers have asked the Ontario government to allow greater flexibility in the educational opportunities available to students so that they can acquire the marketable skills they need to prosper in today's world. They asked for greater collaboration between our post-secondary institutions.

As chair of the Council of Ministers of Education for Canada, I am proud to tell this House that all the ministers from the provinces and territories in Canada agree. We will pursue the transferability of post-secondary credits between colleges and universities and between provinces and territories, given the rapidly transforming landscape of higher learning and the growing importance of prior-learning recognition.

There are several young people from Durham College here in the House. I want them to know that we have listened to what they have told us and we are responding.

Here to celebrate today's introduction of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology Act we have Darla Price, who is president of the student association, and Kerri-Ann Keohagan, a vice-president of university students.

This is all about students and post-secondary education, and we are very pleased today to welcome president Gary Polonsky, governor Dave Broadbent and governor Garry Cubitt as well.

In October we proclaimed the Post-Secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, as part of our strategy to make the post-secondary system more responsive to the changing needs of students and working adults. Under this legislation we are accepting applications for new applied degree programs at the Ontario colleges of applied arts and technology and for out-of-province and private institutions to provide degree programs or operate as a university in Ontario.

In the May budget, my colleague the Minister of Finance announced that the government would invest \$60 million to establish the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, to be located on the campus of Durham College. Today I was pleased to introduce legislation, An Act to establish the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, 2001.

The institute, better known as OIT, would be an innovative university where students would have the choice of earning degrees in programs that mix practical and theoretical knowledge and skills geared to needs of the local workplace. If established by this Legislature, the

University of Ontario Institute of Technology would offer a wide range of opportunities to help students complete their degree. In short, the goal here is to provide one-stop shopping for students looking for a mix of academic and hands-on experience.

OIT would focus on degree programs designed to meet current and future employment and economic development priorities, including applied health science, applied science, advanced manufacturing, policing and community safety, applied art, nuclear technology and safety, business and information technology, and scientific and technological teacher education. Mr Speaker, with the introduction of An Act to establish the Ontario Institute of Technology, 2001, we are addressing the need for workers who will have a higher level of skill and hands-on experience.

Let me assure you and the students of Ontario that our government will ensure that any programs offered by OIT will be of the highest quality. The proposed degree programs would first be assessed by the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board against strict criteria to ensure that they meet or exceed our standards for university education.

Overall, our government is meeting the commitment to allow greater flexibility in the educational opportunities available to students. We have created the framework for more flexibility and opportunities for learning and for greater collaboration between our post-secondary institutions here in Ontario and throughout Canada.

If passed by this House, An Act to establish the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, 2001, would offer students more opportunities and a full range of choices to acquire the skills they need to succeed.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain):

After six years of the largest cutbacks in post-secondary education in Ontario's history, over 60% increase in tuition and students sleeping in motels and on friends' couches because there aren't enough residences built, this government today announces the University of Ontario Institute of Technology.

This is what parents, students, faculty and presidents are telling us—

Interjection.

Mrs Bountrogianni: I'm just relaying the message from the voters. I think you should be interested.

Why is this institute jumping the queue? Other universities and colleges have applied to the quality assurance board and have been waiting patiently, have drawn up plans, it has cost them money—these are places in your ridings, gentlemen and ladies across the way—yet they are not anywhere near being announced in the Legislature.

I'm happy to hear that it will in fact go in front of the quality assurance board. I'm assuming it will go through the quality assurance board with the appropriate amount of time and attention to detail to ensure that this indeed will be a quality institution, that it won't be swept through the legislation in the next day in your fervour to

get it all done before you prorogue the Legislature and go on to your leadership campaign. I'm assuming that's what's going to happen.

1400

Interjection.

Mrs Bountrogianni: "Years," the minister says. Do you hear that, everybody? That's good to hear.

The second thing that I'm hearing from the stakeholders out there is the name: Ontario University Institute of Technology. "That is a very misleading name," is what I'm hearing from the faculty out in the other universities and colleges. In this digital world when people are doing searches for their children and for themselves to look for institutes across the world, when you cue in "University of Technology," you'll have a very misleading picture. You'll have one institute. That's false advertising, it's confusion, and it contradicts Portals and Pathways, which says one-stop shopping: make it clear for the students.

The other thing I'm hearing is that there is no commitment from the government that this \$60 million will be over and above the operating grants to the existing institutes.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: It's not even operating; it's capital.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Whatever. The \$60 million is not over and above the other institutes. Your own Portals and Pathways—speaking of capital, your own committee says \$1.2 billion is necessary. You've only given \$140 million. Thank you for reminding me.

Where are you going to get the professors for this institute? You have not hired any. They're retiring. We will have a shortfall of 12,500 professors by the end of the decade. You have not given them money to hire new ones. You can't hire one overnight, Minister.

The Price Waterhouse study—which, by the way, was not made public—showed that enrolments will be a lot higher than your predictions. You buried that report. I demand on behalf of the students out there that you make that report public. You have based your funding formula, intellectually vacant as that funding formula is, on numbers that are inaccurate. They're significantly below the students actually enrolled, significantly below. Please show us.

Trent University—and the member from Trent should listen to this—has asked for a faculty of education for years. Why are you giving it to this institute when an existing university wants one and you're not giving one to Trent University?

Queen's University wrote to Minister Runciman about the same thing. They have a bachelor of education in technology; it's under capacity. They can handle more students. Instead, you're opening a bachelor of education in technology here. I think I know why, and I think Mr Runciman should take note, and Mr Eves should take note as to why Queen's was ignored.

The Ontario College of Art has a technology niche, and they are also worried about you taking away this niche. They're not worried about competition, Minister; they're worried about unfair competition. If you want to

fund this institute, fine, but don't underfund the other institutes.

As far as residences, where are these students going to live? Have you thought about that? They are presently in motels, hotels and on friends' couches.

It's no wonder that today's release of OCUFA's poll shows that 70% of London constituents—your riding, Minister—say that your government has failed the students of this province, your government has mishandled post-secondary education, your government has no plans, and if there was an election tomorrow, they would be voting for the Liberal Party because we care about our students and we care about the future of this province.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I just want to say to the minister that I really don't think it's a bad idea. I don't. I think it's a good idea, in fact, to introduce such a measure. And do you know what? I don't even think it's such a bad idea to have it in Durham, because I think Mr Flaherty likes it. Clearly he's a big supporter of the idea, because he's flowing the money, and when Flaherty likes it, money flows, right?

Similarly, he loves the private schools, and so he said, "I'm sending over \$500 million of our public dollars to fund private schools," and you can rest assured the Minister of Finance will flow the money. No matter what, the money will flow. So it's a good idea.

I know the Minister of Finance is running your ministry by remote control too, and I'm happy to hear that the money will flow. But here's the problem, Minister: you are introducing a very good idea at the wrong time, again and again. You are sacrificing the rest of the system because Minister Flaherty says, "I want a university in my area," and he gets one. But the entire system that this minister is presiding over is falling apart. They've got no money. Presidents of colleges and universities are saying, "Our system is falling apart." I've got to tell you they are saying it privately; they are not saying it publicly. I'm saying to the presidents, have the guts to tell her, the minister, and to tell this government what you tell us privately: that the college and university sector is floundering.

The minister doesn't want to listen to it because, you see, she's so proud of all of the investments she is making in the university and college sector that she nonchalantly introduces this idea and tells us how great she is and how great this government is and all the money that's flowing from this government to that sector. The presidents are telling us, Minister, and you know—that's what's sad: you know what they're telling us privately that they can't tell you privately, or the public—that we are in trouble. Tuition fees have skyrocketed under you people. Tuition fees have gone up 60%. They can't bear the burden of that debt load. The minister is happy to say, "It hasn't prevented students from going to university." Of course not, because the majority know that you need a university and college education, and they will sustain the debt no matter what. The minister is proud and happy to say that it hasn't prevented them from going to university. We know that, but the debt burden is intolerable.

Buildings are decrepit and are falling apart, and the money isn't flowing. Then madame la ministre says, "But we capped tuition fees at 2%," as if to say that for the poor students who have no basis of earning a living, 2% is not a big issue. Oh, yes, we've increased tuition fees by 60% and we've now capped tuition by 2%.

The presidents of the colleges are saying, "We cannot allow more students in our system, because we can't afford it. We don't get the money commensurate with the numbers of students who are coming into our system. We can't do it." They're telling me privately that they are going to incur a deficit next year. The colleges are saying—Minister, you're not listening.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Ask me why not.

Mr Marchese: But I'm telling you—pay attention to me. College presidents are saying there will be a deficit coming. They won't know how to pay that problem. They're saying, "If the government doesn't give us money, we're going to have to increase tuition fees," beyond this paltry 2% that these students have got to pay, because they can't keep up. They can't keep up with the cost of allowing these students to come in, because you are not giving them the money. Collectively, colleges and universities have gotten \$2 billion less than ever before. They need money to provide programs for these students, and this government doesn't give it away—\$5 billion they're going to cut. Where do you think that money is going to come from? When Flaherty says, "We're going to have to cut \$5 billion more," it's going to come out of the university sector, out of the college sector.

I'm saying to you, Minister, give this \$60 million in capital back to the colleges, give it to the universities, which are starving for money. Give it to them, because this money is needed preciously by them.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent in the face of a new assessment by a member of the executive council that if the government proceeds with more tax cuts, we could get a deficit not of \$5 billion, as has been predicted, but as high as \$6 billion or \$7 billion. Therefore, I seek unanimous consent to allow the finance minister to bring forward a revised economic statement.

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

1410

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. This morning the Premier threatened Ontario's seniors when he threatened to walk away from their home care and drug programs. He said none of these are mandated by the Canada Health Act, so he might just up and walk away from these programs. Your government has already thrown home care into chaos. We know you've committed your-

self to removing some seniors from the drug plan. Now you're talking about abandoning these two programs in their entirety.

Minister, will you take this opportunity to calm our parents and our grandparents by unequivocally denouncing the Premier's reckless threat to their home care, to their health care?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the honourable member knows, the context of the discussion was the fact that federal health spending, when you look at it from a five-year period, a 10-year period, or whatever period you want to look at, has gone down, down, down. Ever since Jean Chrétien has been elected, the percentage of federal spending is lower than it was in 1993. Since 1994-95 we've increased our spending in the province to \$23.7 billion, an increase of over 35%, and yet the federal Liberal government has increased their revenue by over \$8 billion but their health and social service transfers have increased by a paltry \$400 million. We spend in Ontario, as a provincial government, over \$750 a second on health care. Ottawa contributes just \$107 in the same time period. It's clear the federal government is not living up to its responsibilities. The honourable member should be ashamed to be part of the same party.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, let me tell you that you and your government have no moral authority whatsoever when it comes to making your case before the federal government.

Here are the facts, Minister: just last year you signed a five-year deal that's going to give Ontario \$8 billion more over the course of the next four years. If it was such a bad deal, why did you sign it? Of the \$1.2 billion in new money invested in Ontario health care this year, \$1.1 billion came from the federal government. The third matter Ontarians should know is that now that you're telling Ontarians there's no more provincial money for health care, you found \$2.2 billion in provincial money for corporate tax cuts. We know where you stand when it comes to your commitment to health care for Ontarians.

I'm asking you, Minister, in the light of all that, why don't you agree now that you're going to put health care first and that you're going to cancel that corporate tax cut?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me first correct the record. The Premier of this province did not sign any deal with Jean Chrétien. The Premier of this province said at the time—I've got the news release indicating that it falls short of the needs and the expectations of Ontarians. He's been a fighter for health care for this province. He has been fighting the federal government, which cut down on the social service transfers and the health care transfers. He has been fighting Jean Chrétien.

Where has Dalton McGuinty been when we've been fighting for health care? Nowhere. He has not only opposed our position when we're fighting for health care, he has opposed every single tax cut we proposed in Ontario. That's not leadership; that's a disgrace.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, listen, I'll make you an offer. You and I and the Premier will go to Ottawa and

we'll ask the federal government to give us more money for health care, and in return you and I are going to make a solemn commitment. We're not going to put money into corporate tax cuts, we're not going to put money into private school tax credits, and we're going to stop spending hundreds of millions of dollars on partisan political advertising. That's my offer to you.

Hon Mr Clement: Here's the record, Mr Speaker: his federal Liberal cousins promised money for pharmacare. They didn't deliver. His federal Liberal brothers and sisters promised money for home care. They didn't deliver. His federal Liberal cousins say they're for health care. They don't deliver. If he wants to be associated with the federal Liberals, he can go right ahead. We're going to fight for the people of Ontario, and we're proud of it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Members for Windsor West and Windsor-St Clair, please come to order. I think the minister was done. I didn't mean to interrupt him.

FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Health in his capacity as Acting Premier. US economists are telling us today that the US has officially been in a recession for some months now. Of course this is big news here in Ontario because we understand that our economy is so closely linked to the US economy, with 95% of our exports being US-bound.

Your government is telling us that the financial picture here in Ontario is not that rosy either. Our revenues are shrinking and we're looking at up to a \$5-billion deficit.

In these circumstances, Minister, and that is, the case of a US-led recession, the fact that we're looking at up to a \$5-billion deficit which is going to necessitate deep and severe cuts, can you name one economist—I just want one—who supports your government's spending \$2.2 billion on a corporate tax cut?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I don't have to rely on that. I can rely on the statistics of the last few years of a Mike Harris government, where we have cut \$6 billion of income taxes and all sorts of taxes and there has been a \$14-billion increase in provincial revenue. Why is that the case? I'll remind the honourable member. We have more jobs in this province, we have more economic activity in this province because of our policies of tax cuts creating jobs, of spending within our means, of not trying to be all things to all people. That is the economic record. Those statistics speak louder than words. We are proud of our economic record. We're proud of the over 800,000 jobs that this economy has produced with the Mike Harris policies. We have noted with a certain amount of entertainment that finally the federal Liberals are touting their tax cuts. They are saying tax cuts are important. The only

party in the western hemisphere that doesn't believe in tax cuts creating jobs is the opposition provincial Liberals. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Mr McGuinty: Here are a couple of statistics you might want to keep in mind with respect to your tax cut policies. Since the last budget, Ontario has lost 30,000 jobs. We've had the slowest rate of growth in the country. Your predilection for this corporate tax cut has nothing to do with economic policy and everything to do with ideology.

Do you know what I think you should do? I think you should pay some attention to your leadership colleague Chris Stockwell, who said, "I don't know how anyone can tell you they're going to do tax cuts next year, looking at a \$4-billion or \$5-billion deficit." I think Mr Stockwell makes perfect sense when it comes to this particular issue and I'd urge you as a colleague to consider that.

Of course, he's not the only one. I hope you've been keeping an eye on some of the commentary in Ontario newspapers. The Brantford Expositor: "Tax Cuts Need to be Rethought"; the Niagara Falls Review: "Ontario Tories must reconsider their planned \$2.2-billion corporate tax cut"; the Sarnia Observer: "Province Should Reconsider Tax Cuts."

Minister, why don't you admit this has nothing to do with economic policy, it has nothing to do with doing the right thing for Ontario families and it has everything to do with neo-conservative ideology?

Hon Mr Clement: Now I've heard everything. The honourable member started off the question by quoting economists. Then he went to editorial writers. Perhaps the next person will be Jean Chrétien. He's going downhill all the way with his quotations.

I prefer to rely on the testimonials of the 800,000 men and women in Ontario who have a job, who have a chance at economic activity, a chance to pay the rent, a chance to pay the mortgage. Those are the people we listen to on this side of the House because the record speaks for itself. They're the people who have been the direct beneficiaries of tax cuts, because tax cuts create more economic activity, and more economic activity creates jobs. I know the honourable member has voted against every single tax cut that we have proposed in six and a half years. The honourable member belies his concern by his voting record, by not caring about competitiveness, by not caring about productivity. But we on this side of the House listened to the 800,000 individuals who want a better life in Ontario. We're with them.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I'd ask you to pay a little bit of attention to the 30,000 Ontarians who have lost their jobs during the course of the past year, since your government tabled its last budget. I want to draw your attention to a very important report that was released recently by the city of Ottawa. They had some work done with respect to consulting the international high-tech community. Of course that's part of the knowledge economy, and those industries are going to drive growth in the new economy. They asked executives in the international high-tech sector, "What is it that you look for before you decide to come and invest in an Ontario community?" Do

you know the number one thing they're looking for, the key desired attribute? It was a skilled workforce. Out of 20 parameters, tax rates came in ninth. Ahead of tax rates were—and these are high-tech executives—clean air, safe drinking water, investment in post-secondary institutions, leadership in research. Those are the kinds of things that are going to make Ontario truly competitive.

So I'm asking you, Minister, why are you hell-bent on proceeding with \$2.2 billion in corporate tax cuts, when it's going to compromise what really makes Ontario competitive?

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Hon Mr Clement: Of course those issues are important, but that's within the context of the fact that we have instituted 166 tax cuts. If Dalton McGuinty's Liberals were in power, none of those tax cuts would have occurred and perhaps something else would be higher on the agenda of the high-tech firms in his riding.

We know for a fact that the record of Dalton McGuinty has been clear and clear and clear again. As far back as 1998, he is quoted as saying, "I am not the tax cut guy." He's true about that: he is not the tax cut guy. He has never voted for a tax cut, he is not in favour of tax cuts, he does not believe in our competitiveness, in our productivity, in the job growth that we have created in our province through the blood, sweat and tears of hard decisions that had to be made, creating economic opportunity for every Ontarian, regardless of station in life.

That has been our record. We will not shy away from that record, because the record speaks for itself in terms of results, jobs, opportunity and a better economic future for every man, woman and child in this province. That's a record that we are very proud of.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, the failure of the Liberals in Ottawa to follow through on their commitments for a national pharmacare drug plan and a national home care plan is a problem across Canada. But I have to ask you, is that any excuse to go out there and threaten the frail elderly across Ontario and those who rely upon the Ontario drug plan? That's what you're doing.

So I'm going to ask you for a commitment today. I'm going to ask you to commit that home care will not be cut any further, that the Ontario drug plan will not be cut any further and that you are prepared to support now and for the term of your government the principles of the Canada Health Act.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It is absolutely accurate to say that we are trying to save the Canada Health Act from the depredations of the federal Liberals. To have the honourable member and his caucus on our side would certainly be helpful.

We have been adding to the health care budget in record amounts: \$6 billion out of \$6.8 billion that we

have added to spending in this province has gone directly to health care over the six and a half years of our power. I would say that that will continue to be a top priority for this government. Year in, year out, the amount of money we spend on health care increases.

During the 1997 election campaign, the federal Liberals promised in their red book, "All Canadians have access to medically necessary drugs within the public health ... system." Nothing has happened; complete and utter silence on a red book promise going back to 1997. That's the record of the federal Liberals.

We're trying to do all we can to save the Canada Health Act, to save accessibility, to save universality. We need the help of all members of this House. We're not getting it from the provincial Liberals. Perhaps the honourable member can oblige us on his side.

Mr Hampton: Minister, the Liberals in Ottawa have been breaking their commitments on medicare for years; that's an old story. But the issue in Ontario is this: at a time when home care needs new investments and the Ontario drug plan needs new investments, your government strategy is another \$2.4 billion in corporate tax cuts, a \$300-million tax break for private schools and another \$1-billion tax cut for high-income earners; \$3.7 billion in tax cuts. Even the Minister of Labour, who sits next to you, says that it makes no sense, when health care needs those injections, to be cutting \$3.7 billion from corporate and income taxes.

So I'm going to ask you again: commit to the Canada Health Act and stop your reckless tax cuts, which make no sense even to your cabinet colleague, and put the money into the health care system.

Hon Mr Clement: Again, for the record, obviously our increases to home care have been part of the public record: 72% over five and a half years. The drug benefit plan has increased every year. Hospital expenditures have increased to \$8.6 billion, which is a record amount. Our record is there, but there is a growing consensus within and without this province that the real culprits are the federal Liberals. I cite three sources:

Dave MacKinnon, president of the Ontario Hospital Association: "Federal funding has not kept pace with need. ... Federal funding of public health care spending in Canada was 15.8% in 1992-93 and is now only 12.3%." In their submission to the Romanow commission, the Canadian Health Coalition and the Canadian Labour Congress say, "The need for the federal government to fully assume its responsibilities in respect to health, particularly by restoring and increasing federal transfers" is their position. My favourite is Sharon Sholzberg-Gray, the wife of the Liberal Deputy Prime Minister, who called upon the federal government to increase their contribution to federal-provincial transfers on health care by at least \$2 billion. I agree with the wife of the Deputy Prime Minister. I don't agree with the leader of the official opposition.

Mr Hampton: I say to the Minister of Health again, the fact that the Liberals in Ottawa have broken their commitments on medicare time and time again is old news. The issue here is that if you want to put a respon-

sible argument before Ontarians and Canadians, don't on the one hand cut \$3.7 billion in tax revenue and then on the other hand say you simply don't have any money to invest in health care. That makes no sense. Finally, don't try to frighten and threaten the frail elderly in this province and those people who rely upon the Ontario drug plan. That's exactly what you're doing.

Stop the reckless tax cuts, commit to the Canada Health Act, commit to the golden charter that New Democrats have outlined for you, and then you can make the case to Ottawa and shame them into following up on the commitments they've made and have failed to deliver on. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Clement: For a leader of the third party who for weeks on end—it seemed interminable at some points—was advocating a sales tax cut for Ontario, he has quickly changed his tune all of a sudden. He's back on the old and tired rhetoric of how they opposed every single one of our tax cuts.

Our tax cuts, 166 of them, create jobs. They create economic activity. They create economic opportunity at the low end of the pay scale as well as at the high end of the pay scale. We are proud of those tax cuts. It is part of our record that has created over 800,000 new jobs for Ontario. It's how we pay, through more economic activity—which incidentally is taxed—for our health care, for our safer streets, for equal access to an excellent education. That has been our record. We are proud of that record. We are proud of the results it has shown for the people of Ontario. If we only had a federal government that would live up to its responsibilities, which they have shirked year in and year out, then health care in this province would be assured for many years to come.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. The controversy surrounding Hydro One is becoming humorous because on the one hand we have Eleanor Clitheroe, the head of Hydro One, who defies everything you've said in this Legislature. Her vision is that Hydro One would become a transnational company and would be delivering power all over North America, selling Ontario power into the United States. We know what that means: Ontario residents would have to pay the American price—in other words, 70%, perhaps 100% more than what they're paying right now.

Minister, will you finally admit that is the strategy of the people you've put in charge at Hydro One and at Ontario Power Generation? Will you finally admit that that will mean much higher electricity rates for Ontario residents and for Ontario industry, and will you do the right thing and simply say that the answer is don't privatize, don't deregulate our electricity system?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): The honourable member has two issues mixed up: deregulation and entering into competition in the electricity sector. It has nothing to do with Hydro One in the regulated monopoly wires business, of which

Floyd Laughren is in charge. It's hard to answer such hypothetical nonsense given the honourable member doesn't know what he's talking about.

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Mr Hampton: Ernie Eves, to whom you might want to talk one of these days, certainly knows what I'm talking about, because he has said that the whole issue of privatizing Hydro One is a very serious one that should be debated over the next four months. So you might want to talk to the, perhaps, next Premier of Ontario before you give such a flippant answer.

Whether Hydro One is owned by international energy companies or whether it is operated as a non-profit in Ontario, the reality for Ontario consumers is that British Energy wants to export power. They have said so. Other international investors who are interested in buying up OPG want to export power. They have said so. You know that the reason they want to export power into New York, Chicago, Detroit and Boston is because they can get a much higher price there. Are you telling Ontario residents they will have to pay the same high price to keep their power? That's what it means and you know that's what it means. What does that mean for Ontario jobs? What does it mean for Ontario industries? What does it mean for Ontario—

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

Hon Mr Wilson: To respond, if the honourable member wants to talk solely about the future of Hydro One, then Ernie Eves is absolutely correct. It's a monopoly wires business and it has nothing to do with opening up a competitive market, which is the generation side of the business. Again, that monopoly wires business was never regulated in the past. We are regulating it now under the Energy Competition Act, 1998. Floyd Laughren and the Ontario Energy Board, on behalf of consumers and in the best interests of the people of Ontario, now fully regulate the line charges, as the CRTC regulates Bell's line charges on its wires and the OEB regulates the gas line charge on the gas pipeline that's in the ground in the province of Ontario. So I hope he understands that.

Secondly, in the four days this summer when we didn't have enough electricity in this province because we hit peak high temperatures and all the air conditioners were running, we had to buy power. Guess where the most expensive power came from? Not the United States, at \$38 a megawatt hour, but Quebec, at \$1,000 a megawatt hour. I had to pay \$7 million one day to keep the air conditioners on in our hospitals. That was highway robbery. Competition will give us more choice and will give cheaper power to the—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. New question.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Chair of Management Board, but may I say in passing that it is my hope that the Minister

of Energy will be staying away from the nukes over the course of the next couple of hours.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Transportation): Is that a shot?

Mr McGuinty: Yes, that was a shot.

Minister, last month you promised that new rules would stop taxpayer-funded partisan advertising from filling our airwaves. Clearly, they haven't. Over the course of the past few weeks, Ontarians have been subjected to a veritable carpet-bombing of education ads over the airwaves. Those ads are breaking your new rules in five separate ways. Most important, they are partisan, they are wrong, and you know and I know and Ontario taxpayers know that those dollars could be put to a much better use.

Tell me, Minister, why did you break your own rules and allow these partisan government ads on the air?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Mr Speaker, you'll forgive me if I don't take the analysis of the leader of the official opposition. The government has a responsibility to inform the people of Ontario of many of our programs. We want to make it as easy as possible for people across this province to access information about the government.

Most of these government publications, if not all, provide valuable information. I point again to some of the publications we have had. On magazine is a very good example. We have had a number of programs that we have been able to explain. We used them for surveys going back to the public. That's certainly part of the throne speech commitment to actually converse and to interact with the public of Ontario. We've given them the means to do that. Certainly they can't do it unless they're being informed.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, why don't you admit that you can't even honour your own rules? You refused to pass my bill, which would allow an independent, objective third party, ie, the Provincial Auditor, to pass judgment on these ads and determine whether or not they're in the public interest or the interests of your party. You can't do that and you can't even honour your own rules.

You ran more ads during the Grey Cup than the beer companies did. Those ads are partisan and they're breaking your own rules. Listen to some of the self-congratulatory partisan rhetoric: "For six years Ontario has worked to raise education standards. Higher standards are putting our kids first." You go on to make a specific reference to building a stronger economy.

Minister, your rules are obviously a joke. So far, you have spent 234 million—not taking into account the cost of this recent advertising blitz—taxpayer dollars which could have been used to buy textbooks for our children and their schools, to get more hospital beds up and running in Ontario and to get more environmental inspectors up and on the job in Ontario.

I ask you again, Minister, why won't you pass my bill? Let's put an end to partisan political advertising in Ontario once and for all.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I would thank the Leader of the Opposition for actually saying those words. I think they're very important things to say. We have worked very hard to raise standards in education and we are putting children first as a result of these higher standards, so I thank you for continuing this conversation with the public of Ontario.

But getting to the point at hand, we brought in these changes to the directive. This is in direct response to the Provincial Auditor's concerns.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I must say this, and I hear a lot of groaning on the other side from the opposition members: the fact of the matter is that they had an opportunity to do these types of important amendments to the directive while they were in the government. They chose not to do that. We responded directly to the Provincial Auditor and the concerns he had. I believe we have done something very positive.

MINOR HOCKEY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question today is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. At this time of year many families in my riding, Parry Sound-Muskoka, including three of my own children, Renée, Stuart and Winston, are involved in that great tradition of minor hockey. Volunteer coaches, trainers and parents donate a great deal of time to make sure their kids get the most out of their hockey experience. Parents work hard to give their kids an opportunity to play, driving them all over the province, getting up early to go to those early-morning practices and helping with team responsibilities.

But increasingly violence, both physical and verbal, is becoming a greater concern. I was pleased to see that last week you announced an initiative to curb violence in minor hockey. Could you provide more details on this initiative, please?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation): I appreciate the very good question from the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, one of many members of this government who are strong supporters of amateur sport in Ontario to help keep kids fit, to have fun, to develop skills and to encourage teamwork and friendship.

Just last week, one particular program I had the pleasure of launching at the Hockey Hall of Fame with Ron MacLean, the co-host of Hockey Night in Canada, is called Goodsport: the True Spirit of Hockey. The goal of Goodsport is to bring good sportsmanship and respect to the arenas, back into minor hockey, and to create a safe and enjoyable environment for youth hockey players to hone their skills and see their skills flourish.

Players, coaches, parents and referees are asked to participate in the Goodsport program, and with funding of \$250,000 from the province and the work of the Hockey Development Centre, we're going to bring this to arenas from Fort Erie to Fort Frances, right across Ontario.

Mr Miller: I know from my own experience as a coach, trainer and parent that hockey teaches great lessons in teamwork and discipline along with skills like skating and stick-handling. We don't want to see these lessons ruined by violence.

Minister, I have certainly witnessed first-hand overzealous spectators yelling at officials and ruining the experience for participants. How will this program help players, parents, coaches and officials work together to create a better and more enjoyable environment in minor hockey?

Hon Mr Hudak: The member makes an excellent point. Violence, verbal abuse and harassment of players and referees are a growing concern in minor hockey across the province. We want to take them out of the arena and create some room for the true spirit of the game, the skills development and the fun of the sport to flourish. I know the member for Oshawa, Mr Ouellette, a five- and six-year-old instructional coach as well, will tell you the number one reason why referees are leaving the sport is because of verbal harassment from fans and other coaches.

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The province of Ontario and the Hockey Development Centre have engaged players, coaches, fans and parents who are awake at the crack of dawn to take their kids to practice on a regular basis to help to create a code of conduct to use as examples to support sportsmanship. We want to create more Lady Byng-type players like Wayne Gretzky and Stan Mikita and Joe Sakic.

The one important element of good sport is to encourage parents, coaches and officials to sign a good-sport contract to imbue respect for sportsmanship, for safety, for healthy competition, as I said, from Port Colborne to Port Loring and all arenas across this province.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. LCBO outlets in Ontario are selling items and articles such as kitchenware and household goods that are totally unrelated to the sale of alcoholic products. Merchants operating small businesses in small, rural towns in our province are being severely affected by the competition they are facing from their own local LCBO outlets. I don't have to tell you, Minister, that it's very tough to survive as a small business today and the last thing that small entrepreneurs need is competition from their own provincial government.

With the slowing economy, small merchants are looking to the holiday shopping season for some much-needed relief. Will you today tell the House and assure small business owners in Ontario that you will stop competing with small business and sell only related products at the liquor store, which is wine, spirits and liqueur, and stop competing with the small merchant in rural Ontario?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question, because it certainly isn't the intention of the LCBO to go into competition with small business. In fact, I was in the riding of Chatham-Kent last week and was approached by a small business person who is involved with a competitive product with what the LCBO is doing. He had a word with the chairman, Mr Andy Brandt, and as a result of that conversation Mr Brandt withdrew a particular product that was in competition with the small business.

So if the member has specific complaints about specific products in specific areas, please forward them to me, and I will assure you that Mr Brandt will view those with an empathetic eye.

Mr Sergio: Not only will I do that, I will bring that to the attention of the minister.

But let me tell you that last year LCBO stores had some \$6 million in sales of unrelated items, which is \$6 million siphoned off from small businesses into provincial coffers. The mandate of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario is to monitor and control the sale of alcoholic products, not to compete with small retailers. You cannot allow this to continue. Either put a stop to this practice immediately or allow the retailers and other small merchants to sell alcoholic products. You have the responsibility to stop the abuse of power and monopolization. Small businesses need protection, not more competition. I call on you to stop the cash grab and assure us that you will do it today and declare that the only things the LCBO can sell are liquor-related items.

Hon Mr Sterling: I met recently with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and they did not mention this as a significant issue with regard to some of their clients, and they represent many of the small retailers.

This party is more sympathetic to small business than any other party in this Legislature. Let us be clear about that. If small business comes to me or any other minister in this government and has a legitimate complaint, we will look at that complaint and we will deal with it in a speedy fashion. There's no intention in the LCBO in terms of taking over business from small businesses in various communities across Ontario. So as I said before, give me the particular situation, give me the product and we will take care of it. We will take care of small business, as we have in the past.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. First of all, I want to thank you for coming to Oxford county last week to make a major announcement about manure management in the agriculture industry. It was a major project at one of the larger farming corporations in my riding. It was at the establishment of Cold Springs Farm in Thamesford. Unfortunately I was unable to attend, so today in the Legislature I want to recognize his visit. I appreciate the comments he made. Oxford is a county

economically bound by the agriculture business and will undoubtedly benefit from this project. Minister, could you tell me what the project will do for farmers to reduce the use of land application for the management of manure?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I thank the member for Oxford for the question. As the member knows, farmers are the original stewards of the land and they care deeply about taking care of the resources they depend upon on a daily basis.

Yes, I had the opportunity to be in Oxford last week, over at Cold Springs Farm where they run a very impressive and very environmentally responsible operation. They have some innovative ideas in terms of developing technology in the handling of nutrient management. We've partnered with them and with Ontario Pork, Premium Pork, the Ontario Pork Industry Council and Selves Farms, which are investing with us to explore new technologies to better manage manure.

This is a \$352,000 project that reviews a variety of innovative manure management technologies to protect surface and groundwater, improve air quality, increase the value of manure as a nutrient by-product or an energy source, and reduce the amount of land required for manure spreading adjacent to livestock. Our role in this is \$222,000, a little over one half of the project.

Mr Hardeman: Minister, it sounds like a very impressive project. The mayor of Zorra, I believe, attended the announcement. Mayor Bill Semeniuk said, according to the newspaper report, that "the agriculture sector has been struggling with alternative uses for manure, hoping to find some use for it that would also be an economic benefit." Recognizing that there is a group of partners involved in this initiative, could you tell us how other farmers will benefit and how they will find out about this project and the results it produces?

Hon Mr Coburn: We have partnered with a number of exciting projects and partners across Ontario through the Healthy Futures program, and this is one of them as well, where the results of some of this new technology and our studies will be there as information for others in the agriculture industry to benefit from. I'm pleased to say that a report on this project will be written once the technologies have been evaluated. It will be made available to producers and farmers to help them decide what type of system they're better capable of working with. The industry partners will explore opportunities to provide demonstration projects as well on exactly how the technologies work.

This is another example of how we're trying to work with our partners in agriculture and agribusiness in developing new and innovative technologies to handle some of the challenges we have with our environmental concerns.

SCHOOLTEACHERS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education. Your scheme to force teachers to recertify is nothing but a bureaucratic

plan designed once again to attack teachers. Thousands of teachers from across the province have written to say just that.

But worse, your recertification plan is going to mean a \$10-million, 110-person bureaucracy, created yet again in downtown Toronto. Elementary teachers have put forward a proposal called the accountability model that would provide improvements in teaching from the ground up in communities across Ontario, instead of creating another bloated bureaucracy here in Toronto. Why don't you listen to educators instead of creating yet again another top-down bureaucracy that will only, in the end, attack teachers another time?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I'm actually rather surprised at the leader of the third party, who was part of the NDP government that brought in the Royal Commission on Learning that recommended five-year recertification and mandatory professional development. Now the NDP is obviously opposed to it. All three parties supported that recommendation.

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We went to the people of Ontario and said, "If we are elected, we will do that." We were elected and we're delivering on our promise to make sure that all of our teachers in our classrooms can be as up-to-date as possible, recognizing that teachers are out there doing professional development. They see it as part of their commitment to the profession, and we need to make sure that all of our teachers can do that. So another promise made, another promise that we are delivering on.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Madame, you are very big on cutting red tape and you're equally big on attacking others for supporting bloated bureaucracies, but when you do it you call it efficiencies. How does that work? What you're creating here is a \$110-million bureaucracy in downtown Toronto. How can you justify it when you're so big on saying, "We've got to cut red tape"?

Michael Fullan, the dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, said that your recertification plan is like a company keeping excellent books when it's going out of business. It makes sense.

We have received thousands of letters from teachers—hard-working heroes in our schools—who are telling you that they cannot take yet another public attack from you. The solution to this problem is that you've got to start listening to educators and to communities that listen to teachers. Will you listen?

Hon Mrs Ecker: This government did indeed listen. We listened to the Royal Commission on Learning that went out and consulted with educators, with parents, with students. We looked at the best research. We've listened to that. We've looked at the recommendations of all our education partners. We've listened to that. We listened to parents and students who said this was a step that was needed. We went out and said to the voters, "If we're elected, we will do this." We have been elected; we are

doing it. We've taken the advice of all our education partners to put in place a professional development requirement that reflects best practices and best research.

Why is it an attack on teachers to have professional development requirements that are in place for all kinds of professions, jobs and trades across this country, across this jurisdiction? Why is it not an attack on police, on insurance agents, on real estate, on doctors, on nurses, on dentists, on physiotherapists, on massage therapists? The list goes on and on of professions and jobs and people out there who have various kinds of professional requirements—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

SCHOOL BUSES

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

My question is also for the Minister of Education. The minister will know from having listened to rural members on both sides of this House that school bus operators in rural Ontario are facing ever more difficult, nearly desperate circumstances. Six weeks ago in this chamber you, Minister, told me and the Legislature that you understood there was a problem. To quote you from the Hansard of October 11, "We are looking at this and it is a priority." That was October 11.

Since that time, most of these rural school bus operators have been told by their insurers that their school bus insurance is going up in some cases by almost 100%. These rural school bus operators want to know, Minister, when are your ministry and your government going to provide the much-promised and desperately needed relief?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): The honourable member is quite correct: this is a priority for this government. We quite recognize the pressure that is there for school bus operators. We've been able to provide monies on a one-time basis before while the transportation formula, the new policies on transportation, is being developed. We have that as a request before the government to see if we are able to do it again this year.

The financial pressures this government is facing, as we've talked about very clearly, are causing us to have due diligence for a whole range of areas. It is certainly not by choice, but I think the taxpayers in this province would require us to exercise that due diligence. We are indeed doing that before those decisions are made.

Mr Conway: As a former minister of the crown, I understand the pressures and I believe the choices, but we have been told in this province just as recently as this week that the Harris government has decided, with the full support of cabinet, to proceed in a few weeks with opening the public purse to tens of millions of dollars of public money to support kids of parents who want to send those children to private schools. That is a significant new expenditure that the Ontario government has decided, in the face of the very pressures you have just announced, to proceed with.

As winter sets in in Ontario, in the Ottawa Valley I've got thousands of young people who on a daily basis are going to leave rural communities like Palmer Rapids, Calabogie, Wilno and Stonecliffe and drive over very difficult roads, in many cases two and three hours a day, to get to their public school. Their rural school bus operator is telling their parents, their teachers, their trustees and their local members that their situation is serious and almost desperate. It's a matter of good access and, increasingly, it's becoming a matter of the safety of those kids in rural Ontario.

You have clearly decided that you've got the money to fund the private school tax credit. On behalf of rural public school kids, Minister, when are you going to provide the much-needed and oft-talked-about additional financial assistance to rural school bus operators in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate the concern as brought forward by this member and the members of our caucus who have been advocating very strongly on behalf of their school boards and on behalf of those bus operators who do indeed require relief, and I do agree with that.

The government is weighing the decisions on one-time funding for this, as we should, with the due diligence we are exercising in terms of making those decisions in this fiscal year. As soon as the decision is made—and I appreciate the pressure and the need for a decision quickly. If it could have been done quickly, we would have. I appreciate the concern of the honourable member. When that decision is made, we will certainly be communicating that to this House and communicating that to the bus operators and the school boards.

WATER QUALITY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. First, Minister, I'd like to personally congratulate you on a very successful celebration with the Ontario Environment Industry Association yesterday.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario stresses that in addition to being purified in water treatment plants, drinking water must be protected at the source. As you know, my riding of Durham includes the Oak Ridges moraine. The moraine contains the largest concentration of headwater streams in the greater Toronto area and acts as a recharge area for groundwater. Many constituents, such as Barb Karthein and Sandy Beaton of the Scugog Shores Millennium Project, have been working hard in their communities to protect groundwater.

Minister, you can well appreciate how important groundwater quality is to my residents but indeed across Ontario. How will your most recent announcement of flowing \$10 million to groundwater studies help to protect Ontario's drinking water, not just in Durham but across Ontario?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of the Environment): The announcement that was made recently, the

\$10 million that is flowing to undertake the groundwater studies, is the first time we have undertaken such a comprehensive study of groundwater in Ontario. As the member has mentioned, many people in his riding do rely on groundwater, as they certainly do in my community. It's absolutely essential, if we're going to protect the quality and quantity of water in Ontario, that we take a holistic approach. That is, we need to make sure that not only is the water coming out of the tap clean, but we also need to ensure the water at its source, the groundwater, is thoroughly protected. The information we will obtain from the groundwater studies will enable us to determine not only the quality of water that is available to us but also the quantity of water.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Minister, for that very thorough response. Could you explain to the House how Ontario municipalities such as Durham region and our local conservation authorities will be involved in the process of studying groundwater? Also, how were the announcements received by municipalities across the province?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The money has flowed not just to municipalities, but money flowed to those municipalities that obviously had great reliance on groundwater. It also flowed to those that were willing to work with other municipalities and with conservation authorities. All of the money will be made available and will have been released by March 2002. The money is presently being released. As I say, it is the largest amount of money ever.

I would just like to quote Dennis O'Grady, the general manager of the South Nation Conservation Authority in Cornwall, who said, "This is the first time in at least 20 years that a comprehensive study has been carried out. In some parts of the region, there may have never been studies carried out." In Owen Sound, the director, Jan McDonald, said, "We are thrilled. How often do municipalities get 85% funding?"

This is another step that our government is taking in order to ensure that water in this province is protected and safe.

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HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is for the Minister of Health. Mr Minister, on November 15 you joined me in the riding with our local health care providers on the topic of hospital restructuring. In 1998, your hospital closing commission rejected local solutions and we were forced to close one of our hospitals for acute-care patients and undertake expensive renovations to the other. Since that time, the cost has skyrocketed to some \$20 million-plus. You forced this on us; you should pay for it.

Minister, when you were in Cornwall you had no answers and no new money. Do you now? If not, will you have some answers before Christmas?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for the opportunity to discuss what I thought was a very important meeting in his community which he invited me to. I think I actually paid the bill for the breakfast though, so I guess we got a little bit out of it that way. In any event, it certainly was a very fruitful meeting. From my perspective, it was very important to have the mayor and the local reeve there, and some of the local civic leaders as well as local providers.

What I heard loud and clear was a pride in the local community, a pride in what is possible when it comes to the delivery of health care and an indication that they understood that they had to participate in creating better health care in their community; that it all couldn't come from Queen's Park, that there was a local desirability and a local responsibility as well, particularly from the mayor, if I may say so. I've taken all of those issues under advisement and I can tell the honourable member that I came out wiser than when I entered that discussion.

Mr Cleary: Well, Minister, that's not good enough.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order, please. Sorry.

Mr Cleary: This has been going on for three years. The cost associated with this forced restructuring has climbed and the local taxpayers are the ones that are facing the burden. As it stands now, this will result in a 20-year property tax burden to my constituents of \$20 million-plus. I can tell you, I haven't heard one constituent yet say they were in favour of that tax increase. If the province makes a decision, it should pay for it.

Minister, how much longer are you going to force citizens in my community to wait before you admit you were wrong and give them the health care funding they deserve?

Hon Mr Clement: I'm sorry I'm not living up to the honourable member's expectations—it's a good thing we weren't going for dinner. From my perspective, in all seriousness, what we discussed, I think, was highly significant. There was an acknowledgement of local participation, not only in terms of finding the solutions but also paying for those solutions, which incidentally is the case in every other community in the province of Ontario.

When we do these restructurings, when we do these additions to hospitals or brand new greenfield sites, there is always a local participation. Sometimes it is done through local philanthropy; sometimes it's done through the local tax base; sometimes it's a combination of the two. From our perspective, there is no requirement that it be from the local tax base, but there is a requirement that the local community participate in the decisions that have been made. Certainly I found from his community that that was the case, and certainly we wish to come to a mutually understandable and sustainable solution with respect to his local community. The discussions are ongoing and I certainly appreciate the local member's participation in those discussions.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship.

Minister, during second reading debate in the Legislature last week, opposition members argued that the Ontarians with Disabilities Act will have no effect on the private sector. The Liberals went to the Ontarians with disabilities action committee and held consultations of their own, but I have yet to hear from the Liberals what recommendations they have of their own. In the House, the Liberals say Bill 125 should include legislation that imposes sanctions on the private sector immediately. Do you have any idea where the Liberals stand on the ODA?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): Like all members of the House, I listened to the debate from the Liberals across the floor and—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Jackson: Well, you ask the questions. That's what you're supposed to do. You're not asking any questions on the ODA. People in Windsor kind of like the program.

What we have heard from the Liberals is the following: first, they did an Ontarians with disability review and never talked to the private sector, never talked to hospitals. They talked to a handful of disabled persons and promised them nothing. They didn't promise anything in the last election and they still, with this bill on the floor of the Legislature, have not made one promise to the disabled community. Yet they're out there throwing around comments, like the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough, who says, "I don't care what this costs. The taxpayers should pay for it." The member for Windsor-St Clair says, "You're going to have to wait two years" to hear from the Liberal Party and where they stand on the disabled and the disabilities issues. All we've heard from the Liberals is that there is no commitment from their consultation, they want to delay the agenda of reform in this province and they want to play politics with the needs of the disabled.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?

Ms Mushinski: My question is again to the Minister of Citizenship. Opposition members have also suggested that Bill 125 should be put on hold while further consultations take place. Interestingly enough, this Liberal opposition tactic coincides with concerns expressed by the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, who wanted this act passed by November 23.

Minister, disabled persons in my riding of Scarborough Centre have told me that they want us to get on with this legislation and the disabled community council wants to work with government partners, especially municipalities, to implement the regulations. Notwithstanding that the Liberals want to delay, delay, delay, how soon can this government get the ODA up and running?

Hon Mr Jackson: As members of the House know, the committee of the Legislature is going to five different

cities in the province to conduct the reviews and public hearings on the bill. We hope to have the bill back here for clause-by-clause and a bill for third reading in the House in December so that we can complete this legislation as promised to the disabled persons.

I want to remind members of the House that the bill contains, in section 22, 10 specific clauses with respect to regulatory and regulation-making authority put in the hands of the disabled community, who will advise the government on making those regulations. It's the seventh principle of the eleven principles of the ODA resolution stated in this House. These regulations will be developed by the disabilities community. We hope that this will be proclaimed by the end of the year and hopefully then the first elements to be proclaimed in this legislation will be the regulatory power and the new—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. New question.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education. The Keewatin-Patricia school board doesn't have sufficient money in their budget to provide special education to all the children who need it, so they have followed the lead of your government and they have cut the hours of work of special education assistants from seven hours a day to five hours a day. The result is special-needs children are being hurt, their needs simply aren't being met and the special education assistants, librarians and other school support staff have been forced out on strike over issues of working conditions and pay.

The question is, when will your government fully fund special education in this province so that the special-needs children will receive the education they deserve and the support staff and special education assistants will receive the respect and dignity they deserve?

1510

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Special education is indeed a very important priority. Those supports can help a student to succeed, to overcome a potential challenge. It's one of the reasons we've been increasing special-needs money for school boards every year. For example, we've had a 17% increase in special-needs funding.

The school boards are funded based on their enrolment growth based on their assessments. There's a whole range of things. We've also built in guarantees to school boards so they have some predictability in terms of what their funding will be. I do know there have been some school boards that, in terms of their funding, have to live within a budget and school boards have been making decisions about how to allocate staff, how to pay for pay raises. Sometimes those things are related in terms of increasing pay, sacrificing in terms of the number of staff that are available. Those are judgments that trustees are elected to make and that they indeed make.

PETITIONS

LONDON HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the London Health Sciences Centre is a world-class academic health sciences centre serving people throughout southwestern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Health has forced the London Health Sciences Centre to find \$17 million in annual savings by 2005; and

“Whereas the London Health Sciences Centre has agreed to cut 18 programs in order to satisfy directions from the provincial Ministry of Health; and

“Whereas these cuts will put the health of the people of southwestern Ontario, and particularly children, at risk; and

“Whereas these cuts will diminish the London Health Sciences Centre’s standing as a regional health care resource; and

“Whereas these cuts will worsen the continuing physician shortages in the region;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned” 1,000 residents of Port Burwell, Alymer and other parts of southwestern Ontario, “petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Harris government take immediate action to ensure these important health services are maintained so that the health and safety” of the 1,000 people listed on this petition “throughout southwestern Ontario are not put at risk.”

I’m in full agreement and have signed my signature hereto.

INSURANCE CLAIMS

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This petition comes from 578 different people in my riding of Brant and as far away as Waterdown, Ancaster and Waterloo.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas it behooves us to ensure the practice of justice in all cases, and for all persons; and

“Whereas the statute of limitations applies in cases where it has been impossible to tell for many years what the truth of an insurance claim was;

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

“The laws concerning the statute of limitations for insurance claims should be suspended if it has been discovered that there was a possibility of evidence tampering and/or it is discovered that the case was investigated poorly, causing hardship to those who were wrongly blamed for a car accident.”

I affix my name to this petition.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): It’s always important to stand and speak on behalf of my constituents. This petition was presented to me and I read it as regularly as possible.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we the residents of 145 Liberty Street South in Bowmanville wish to continue to rent our apartments and are not interested in purchasing condominium units; and

“Whereas we the residents of 145 Liberty Street South in Bowmanville have invested considerable amounts of money in decorating and upgrading our apartments; and

“Whereas we the residents of 145 Liberty Street South in Bowmanville were of the understanding that this was rental property, not condominiums;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to review this matter and request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing or any other relevant ministry to investigate these concerns to ensure that we the residents of 145 Liberty Street South in Bowmanville can continue to rent their apartments.”

As a follow-up on this daily petition, I’ve written to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I have every confidence that he’s listening to me. I’ve spoken with the residents of 145 Liberty Street South and I’m pleased to submit and sign this petition on their behalf.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Harris government’s rigid education funding formula is forcing neighbourhood school closures”—potentially—“such as Consolidated, Dalewood, Lakebreeze, Maplewood and Victoria in the city of St Catharines, and has centralized control for education spending and decision-making at Queen’s Park, and will not allow communities the flexibility to respond to local needs;

“Whereas chronic underfunding and an inflexible funding formula is strangling the system and students are suffering the consequences;

“Whereas there is evidence that larger schools do not automatically translate into cost-effectiveness;

“Whereas smaller, neighbourhood schools have lower incidences of negative social behaviour, much greater and more varied student participation in extracurricular activities, higher attendance rates and lower dropout rates, and foster strong interpersonal relationships; and

“Whereas small, neighbourhood schools in local communities, both rural and urban, serve as important meeting areas for neighbourhood organizations which help bring individuals together and strengthen neighbourhood ties and the current funding formula does not recognize community use of these schools,

“Be it resolved that the Harris government immediately reconfigure their unyielding funding formula to restore flexibility to local school boards and their communities which will allow neighbourhood schools in our province to remain open.”

I affix my signature; I'm in complete agreement.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition here and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

“Whereas in Ontario adopted adults are denied a right available to non-adoptees, that is, the unrestricted right to identifying information concerning their family of origin;

“Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

“Whereas these rights are denied to persons affected by the secrecy provisions in the adoption sections of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts of the province of Ontario;

“Whereas research in other jurisdictions has demonstrated that disclosure does not cause harm, that access to such information is beneficial to adult adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents, and that birth parents rarely requested or were promised anonymity;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact revision of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts to permit adult adoptees unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information; permit birth parents, grandparents and siblings access to the adopted person's amended birth certificate when the adopted person reaches age 18; permit adoptive parents unrestricted access to identifying birth information of their minor children; allow adopted persons and birth relatives to file a contact veto restricting contact by the searching party; replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling.”

I affix my name to that petition.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

“Whereas the Lord's Prayer, also called Our Father, has been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada in the 18th century;

“Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and a tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary Ontario life;

“Whereas the Lord's Prayer is a most meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontario citizens;

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

“That the Legislature of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings in accordance with its long-standing established custom, and do all in its power to maintain use of this prayer in municipal chambers in Ontario.”

I affix my signature.

MEDICAL SCHOOL TUITION

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas medical school tuition was deregulated by the Ontario government in 1998; and medical school tuition has and continues to increase in excess of 300% such that at some universities tuition is now \$14,000;

“Whereas the combination of excessive tuition and frozen student assistance have impaired students' accessibility to a medical education;

“Whereas the physicians most likely to practise in a rural area are originally from rural areas themselves; and

“Whereas unaffordable tuition disproportionately excludes medical students from rural communities;

“Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government and the universities of Ontario to ensure that medical education be made financially accessible to all qualified students; and

“Be it further resolved that we, the undersigned, request that medical tuition be capped and re-regulated at a level accessible to all Ontarians, and that the Ontario student assistance plan/Canada student loan program be adjusted, in order to ensure that Ontarians from all communities are able to afford a medical school education.”

This petition is signed by a number of residents from Leamington and I'm pleased to hand it to a very dedicated page from Leamington, Kathryn.

1520

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

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

“Whereas in Ontario, adopted adults are denied a right available to all non-adoptees, that is, the unrestricted right to identifying information concerning their family of origin; and

“Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; and

“Whereas these rights are denied to persons affected by the secrecy provisions in the adoption sections of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts of the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas research in other jurisdictions has demonstrated that disclosure does not cause harm, that access to such information is beneficial to adult adoptees,

adoptive parents and birth parents, and that birth parents rarely requested or were promised anonymity;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact revision of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts to permit adult adoptees unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information; permit birth parents, grandparents and siblings access to the adopted person’s amended birth certificate when the adopted person reaches age 18; permit adoptive parents unrestricted access to identifying birth information of their minor children; allow adopted persons and birth relatives to file a contact veto restricting contact by the searching party; and replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling.”

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, I add my name to this petition.

CORMORANTS

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition that reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is in year two of a five-year study on the impact of cormorants and possible management strategies which was to have included experimental controls beginning in 2001; and

“Whereas recently the Minister of Natural Resources, the Honourable John Snobelen, reiterated at the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters’ annual general meeting and wildlife conference that the MNR is committed to experimental control of cormorants at specific local sites in 2001; and

“Whereas cormorant populations in Ontario have increased to over 260,000 birds in the past several years and will continue to grow until they deplete fish stocks; and

“Whereas cormorants are having obvious local negative effects on fisheries and habitats within the Great Lakes; and

“Whereas cormorant populations are no longer in need of special protection;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Ministry of Natural Resources to:

“(1) Immediately begin to significantly reduce cormorant populations where there are local habitat or fisheries effects and to make public the experimental design and results to date of the MNR’s five-year study to assess the impact of cormorants; and

“(2) Remove the special protected status from cormorants.”

I affix my signature in support.

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I have another thousand signatures from the following communities. I’ll be very quick, because I’ve written out the names: Bath, Kingston, Odessa, Napanee, Enterprise, Newcastle, Bowmanville, Whitby, Penetang, Orléans, Gloucester, Kirkfield, Port Stanley, Tillsonburg,

Washago, Cucumber Beach, Sturgeon Falls, Lively, Bramalea, Stoney Creek, Pickering, Ajax, Smiths Falls, Brockville, Kanata, Bradford, Keswick, Owen Sound, Orangeville, Shelburne, Wasaga Beach, Terra Cotta, Ottawa, Bobcaygeon, Parry Sound, Windsor, West Lorne, Rockland, Clarence Creek, Renfrew, Kingsville, Belle River, Stoney Point, Staples and Osgoode. They’re from all over Ontario and they’ve asked me to present on their behalf.

“Whereas services delisted by the Harris government now exceed \$100 million in total;

“Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions;

“Whereas the new Harris government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across vast regions of Ontario;

“Whereas this new Harris government policy is virtually impossible to implement in underserved areas across Ontario;

“Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services.”

I sign that, knowing that those who have ears to hear will hear.

OHIP SERVICES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I’ve just got to say that’s a good petition. I have another petition here on a different matter, and it reads as follows:

“To the Ontario Legislature:

“Whereas the Harris government’s decision to delist hearing aid evaluation and re-evaluation from OHIP coverage will lead to untreated hearing loss; and

“Whereas these restrictions will cut off access to diagnostic hearing tests, especially in geographic regions”—such as mine—“of the province already experiencing difficulties due to shortages of specialty physicians; and

“Whereas OHIP will no longer cover the cost of miscellaneous therapeutic procedures, including physical therapy and therapeutic exercise; and

“Whereas services no longer covered by OHIP may include thermal therapy, ultrasound therapy, hydrotherapy, massage therapy, electrotherapy, magnetotherapy” and other “nerve therapy stimulation and biofeedback; and

“Whereas one of the few publicly covered alternatives includes hospital outpatient clinics where waiting lists for such services are up to six months long;

“Whereas delisting these services will have a detrimental effect on the health of Ontarians, especially seniors, children, hearing-impaired people and industrial workers; and

“Whereas the government has already delisted \$100 million worth of OHIP services,

“We, the undersigned,” and many people from our communities in the Timmins-James Bay riding, “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately restore OHIP coverage for these delisted services.”

I affix my signature to that petition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): On a point of order, the member for Wellington-Grey—

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): That’s good enough. Mr Speaker, I was going to stand up during the time for petitions, but I waited until it was over. The member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, when he reads the petition, for two days in a row has read all the municipalities that he’s reading the petition from. I don’t, quite frankly, think that’s in order, nor do I think it would be if he were to list all the names in the petition. Unfortunately, you were not in the chair when he was doing that; Mr Carr, the Speaker, was. I simply believe that it’s out of order, and that in the future, whether it’s you or the other Speakers, he should be ruled out of order.

Mr Bisson: On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to say I forgot to say that people signed from Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing, Timmins, Hearst and Mattice.

The Acting Speaker: As members know, the standing orders speak to what is permitted during petitions, and it is very helpful if members would subscribe to the standing orders and not editorialize or read sections of the petition that are not relevant. As a matter of fact, if you were to paraphrase, which, I might say, is encouraged, and just get to the “be it resolved part,” it is very helpful for getting more members on to the petition section of the day.

1530

OPPOSITION DAY

WALKERTON INQUIRY REPORT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This is an opposition day of the Liberal Party. I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario offers its unequivocal support to the people of Walkerton who are calling on the Attorney General to release the report or reports of Chief Justice Dennis O’Connor on the Walkerton tragedy immediately upon their receipt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for St Catharines.

1530

Mr Bradley: I’m delighted, actually, that just having this particular item on the order paper has forced the government to agree that they will release it immediately. Usually, you have to fight against the government to get something released. I guess the embarrassment of having this on the order paper and the fact that the government knew it would have to vote on this has compelled the

government to agree with me, and I want to say I’m delighted. I’ll look forward to the reasoning they will bring forward this afternoon in their speeches before the House.

But I do want to say that I had a genuine concern that somehow these people on the other side—and that includes my good friend from Gore, Malton, Springdale and other places—

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Bramalea.

Mr Bradley: —Bramalea—from all those places. I trust that he would want this report released immediately. There are others, however, within the cabinet who don’t always agree with what you people in the backbenches have to say. So I am delighted that the government is stampeding now to agree with my contention that it should be released immediately. There is good reason to believe that this government would want to hide the results of this report as much as possible.

First of all, I should tell you, I’m going to compliment the government in this particular case on the choice of the commissioner, so get ready. I thought the choice of Justice Dennis O’Connor was a good choice as commissioner. In my opinion, I think the manner in which he conducted the inquiry was exemplary. I may or may not agree with the final conclusions and recommendations, but I do want to say that I thought that was a good choice, which the opposition obviously had to agree with or at least were asked about. We thought it was a good choice.

You will recall that the reason we even had an inquiry into the Walkerton situation was because the opposition demanded that inquiry in the Legislative Assembly and forced it upon the government. Initially the government was very reluctant to have an inquiry, but the pressure was building. Dalton McGuinty asked for it several times. Other members of the official opposition and the third party asked for it. I think members of the news media were demanding it and certainly the people of Walkerton. So it was appropriate to have a public inquiry into this matter, just as it would be to have a public inquiry into the Ipperwash affair, where the Premier, in that case, seems to be doing everything he can to avoid an inquiry into the Ipperwash situation.

We had that inquiry, and there has been much testimony—very revealing, I might add—about the negligence of the government in this matter. If you were to ask the bold question, “Was the government completely responsible for absolutely everything that happened in Walkerton?” I think you would not get a collective and unanimous yes in that case. If you were to ask the question, “Did the policies of this government increase the possibility of a tragedy such as Walkerton happening?” I think most people in this province who are fair-minded would say it did. Let me outline why I happen to think that is the case.

First of all, I want to say that my worry about when this was going to be released revolved around the fact

that one of the first hirings the government made after the Walkerton incident happened was Paul Rhodes. Paul Rhodes is a well-known government guru, media relations person, now in the private sector, making money hand over fist. Paul was hired to bail out the then Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Dan Newman. I think the contract was \$50,000, and that's one of the smaller contracts Mr Rhodes has had with this government or with government agencies. There was a worry that somehow this was going to spin out of control. It was his job to spin it back into the government orbit.

I even noticed, although it wasn't widely advertised, that Paul Rhodes was up in Walkerton when the Premier appeared on June 30 before the inquiry. That was, of course, the Friday before the long weekend and after the House had concluded its deliberations. Coincidentally, the Premier happened to be available on that occasion to appear before the inquiry. I'm sure that was strictly coincidental. It had nothing to do with trying to protect the Premier from further questions in this House or hoping that the public would be interested in going away on a long weekend.

I did see Deb Hutton up in Walkerton, and I said Paul Rhodes and others of the media relations types, the advisers on spin, were with the Premier. I'm sure there are those in government who said, "Let's find a convenient day upon which to release this report. We'll have to massage the message that goes out with it, first of all, and then we'll find a convenient time to release it."

That's why I thought it appropriate to bring forward this resolution, to get everybody on record as saying it should be released immediately it is available, on behalf of the people of Walkerton.

Walkerton and the tragedy that happened there—we call that Walkerton now; I guess people refer to it as Walkerton—was something that was almost bound to happen. It was bound to happen because of the kinds of policies the government had embarked upon, the kinds of policies the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Chris Stockwell, is talking about today in his leadership campaign. Mr Stockwell, you will recall, said yesterday he didn't believe that the government could invoke further tax cuts because the government was going to face a \$4-billion or \$5-billion deficit next year.

Back in the early days of the Harris government, they were so intent upon invoking and implementing tax cuts for the wealthiest people in this province that they were prepared to make substantial and damaging cuts to various ministries, including the Ministry of the Environment, to be able to give those tax cuts. So they had a combination: they first of all borrowed money to finance the tax cuts and made significant and substantial cuts to important ministries such as the Ministry of the Environment.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Can you believe that, Jim?

Mr Bradley: Of course, I can believe it because I know their ideology. One would think, I say to the mem-

ber for Trinity-Spadina, that one wouldn't want to believe something of that nature. But with this government I would certainly believe it because of their ideology and because of the fact that their policies are driven not by a practical sense, not even by common sense, but rather by ideology.

What we had was a situation where the Ministry of the Environment was almost the number one target of the government. That's understandable because there were a number of Tory candidates who were going around the province in 1995—probably none of them who are sitting in the House today—who were saying to some of their business friends, "Wink, wink, nod, nod. We'll get the Ministry of the Environment out of your face. Don't worry."

Do you know something? I want to give the government credit for keeping promises. That was one promise the government kept. Unfortunately, the consequences were dire for the people of this province and specifically for the people of Walkerton.

Let's look at what happened to the Ministry of the Environment. They cut, first of all, one third of the staff. Fully one third, 33%, of the staff was fired out the door—most unfortunate—out of the Ministry of the Environment.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): They went to—

Mr Bradley: The member for Brampton will have a chance later on to refute those comments.

Second, the budget was cut by 45% to 50%; I've heard higher than that. I have tried to say—

Mr Spina: It was transferred.

Mr Bradley: I don't think so. I have tried to err on the side of a conservative figure and I've tried to say 45%. But you cannot annihilate, you cannot pull apart a ministry, you cannot savage such a ministry with cuts without having dire consequences.

The Ministry of the Environment used to have a good overseeing role, an inspecting role, when it came to the provision of safe drinking water in this province. One of the first things they did was close the regional laboratories. The people who worked in those laboratories were considered to be among the very best in the country in terms of their ability, in terms of their qualifications and in terms of their job performance.

This government decided it would close those regional laboratories and turn the water testing over to the private sector. I disagree with that step. But let's put my disagreement with that step aside for a moment and say, if you were a government that was determined to do that, what you would do obviously is take some time to allow a transition and set up a protocol or rules for the private sector companies in reporting contamination that would be found in the water supply.

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I am convinced to this day that had the samples from Walkerton gone to a provincial lab—that is, one of the Ministry of the Environment laboratories—they would have immediately sounded an alarm, not only to the oper-

ator of the system but even more importantly to the medical officer of health, and perhaps lives could have been saved and perhaps several hundred people would have been spared the consequences of drinking poisoned water in Walkerton. But this government decided it was going to be more important to invoke tax cuts and make substantial cuts to the Ministry of the Environment.

Having been a Minister of the Environment in years gone by, I can tell members of the House that it is labour intensive by its nature. It requires the financial resources and the staff to be able to do its job appropriately. We were seeing massive, substantial and damaging cuts being made to that ministry.

The other factor is the Red Tape Commission. This Red Tape Commission has more power than many people would think. I can't think of a minister in here who likes the Red Tape Commission, because they're an outside group who make recommendations or force ministries to take certain actions. They seem to have it in for the Ministry of the Environment. Certainly that was the impression—if you were to talk to Ministers of the Environment off the record, I'm sure that would be the case, but also ministry staff. They had it in for that ministry. In fact, one of the co-chairs of the commission tried to interfere in a court case involving a waste management company. That, of course, was documented in the *Globe and Mail* article, and that was a very serious intrusion. A now-defeated member of the Legislature made representations on behalf of a company. My point is that the Red Tape Commission had it in for the Ministry of the Environment.

I'm not an unreasonable person, I don't think. I'm not a person who will stand in the House, point at the Premier and say, "Premier, you killed seven people," or "You were responsible for that many dead people." I would not do that.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I have not. As the member would know, I have never done that, nor would I. That's not my style. What I would say is that the policies of the Harris government contributed to what happened in Walkerton, partially through negligence and partially intentionally by dismantling the Ministry of the Environment, by proceeding with the privatization of the laboratories, knowing full well that the risk would be increased.

I was there for the questioning of the Premier in Walkerton at the Walkerton inquiry on June 30, and I remember the intense questioning that was directed at the Premier. On that occasion, it was clear that the government knew the risks were increased. In fact, they had two business plans: one business plan for the public, which said nothing about increased risks; and another internal business plan that pointed out that the risk to our drinking water, in terms of its contamination, would be increased by the government policies of the day.

The government was aware of outsiders making these charges. The opposition certainly had something to say about this and warned about the consequences of the government cuts. There are those on the government side

particularly, but in the public, who say, "Well, that's the role of the opposition. And while we don't always believe the government, we don't always believe the opposition either. Maybe it's somewhere in between; maybe one of them is right. I don't know." But I looked at what the Provincial Auditor had to say. The Provincial Auditor warned this government that their policies as they related to water quality were deficient and that problems were arising.

Two different Environmental Commissioners said the same thing. Erik Peters, who was the Provincial Auditor, said this. Eva Ligeti certainly had this to say when she was the Environmental Commissioner, and even Gordon Miller, appointed by the government—the former President of the Progressive Conservative Association in North Bay and the riding of Nipissing federally—had critical things to say about the government as relates to its water policy. So I believe Walkerton will be a matter of infamy for this government for some time to come. It is, in my view, a symbol of what happens when you have a government that so hates government itself, that so dislikes the public sector, that so wants to dismantle and denigrate government and the public sector, it's prepared to take drastic action that would put its people at risk.

Did the government deliberately do this, absolutely knowing it was going to end up with poisoned water? Of course not. Again, I'm not a person who makes silly charges against the government. But did it increase the risk of that happening? I think few people would disagree with that.

Dr Richard Schabas, who is the former medical officer of health of Ontario, also issued a significant warning. During the Walkerton inquiry there was testimony that was extremely revealing and condemning of the government's role, some from former members of the Ministry of the Environment, some from present employees of the Ministry of the Environment.

Let me quote from something Dr Schabas had to say that I thought was pretty revealing. By the way, if there are villains in this piece, there's somebody who was not a villain: it was the former Minister of Health, the Honourable Jim Wilson, because in correspondence he had with the Minister of the Environment he warned of potential problems, but those warnings were ignored by two different Ministers of the Environment.

Let's hear what Dr Schabas had to say. This is his testimony. It says, "The third meeting, which to the best of my recollection was at the end of May of 1997, I was actually in Montreal with the minister and with the deputy at a meeting of the federal and provincial medical officers of health, we were there to discuss the creation of the board agency, which I was very much involved with as a policy standpoint from the ministry, and we had a discussion that morning at which point the minister and the deputy both identified the fact that the proposed policy changes and legislative changes were going back to policy and priorities committee of cabinet that afternoon and there was not going to be anyone there to represent the viewpoint of the ministry or the viewpoint

of public health and there were a number of important issues that were still on the table for that day's discussion.

"So, at the direction of the minister, I came back, I missed the second half of the minister's meeting, came back to Toronto to attend the policy and priorities committee meeting, which would have been in the late afternoon, and the way these meetings work, there's a little ante room where all the civil servants who come in for selected items wait and we sat and waited—I sat and waited for the public health item to be called. When it was, I came in to the meeting and sat down in the appropriate chair for the table to prepare to discuss these issues, at which point an official assistant deputy minister in cabinet office came over and put his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Dr Schabas, the Premier doesn't want you here for this discussion.'" This is the chief medical officer of health of Ontario, and the Premier doesn't want him there for discussion.

Dr Schabas goes on, "So I was taken aback and started to express my concerns to him and then I looked and I realized that the Premier himself was sitting directly across the table from me so I turned and I addressed my remarks to the Premier and basically said that the Minister of Health has specifically asked that I be here, that these are important issues with regard to public health, they are important concerns, and that in my view it was very important that the viewpoint of public health be heard in these discussions and the Premier looked at me and I was quite certain was hearing what I was saying, we weren't more than a few feet apart, and then he basically turned away from me and, I mean, as far as I was concerned, the Premier was turning his back on public health and then I left the meeting and that was the last opportunity that we had to discuss these before these changes were made to the public health system."

Pretty condemning stuff. Dr Schabas is not a radical. Dr Schabas has served governments of all political stripes. He's extremely highly regarded for his integrity and his expertise and his concern for public health, and Dr Schabas in essence said that the Premier turned his back on public health that day, didn't want to hear what Dr Schabas had to say about the potential dangers to the public of the policies of this government. So that was pretty condemning, I think, of this government.

I guess what people were concerned about was that the government, when it finally made its decision to close those provincial laboratories, simply, like a bull in a china shop, headed right into the decision without looking at the consequences. Such a very short turnover time, no rules were put in place, and as a result we had a situation in Walkerton where key results of testing of the water of Walkerton were kept from the people of this province, particularly the people of Walkerton, because it was a private sector lab with no rules in place to notify the medical officer of health.

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I can say that there was so much testimony that was revealing that I'm going to find the results of this inquiry to be very interesting. I think it's going to be important to

note what happened and why it happened because it will reveal, in my view, the consequences of an ideological government that is not unlike the Davis government of which the Honourable Robert Runciman, a minister who is here this afternoon, was a member. But unlike the Davis government, this government was prepared to bulldoze ahead with radical changes. I think it could be said of the Davis government and some subsequent governments that they were for incremental change, that they wanted to have the ducks in place before making those changes so the consequences would not be dire for the people of this province.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Except when they bought an oil company.

Mr Bradley: Except when they bought an oil company, as my friend the member for Brockville tells us. He was opposed to that—I want to put that on the record—at that time.

So that's what we have. We have a government that really says it's not a government, it's here to shrink government, to discredit government, and we know that the Fraser Institute and all the right-wing so-called think tanks and the right wing are there to discredit government. They want to create a crisis in public institutions so that people will no longer have faith in them and then they can implement private solutions. Obviously we see the Premier trying to head in that direction in the field of health care today.

So Walkerton stands as a genuine blemish on the record of this government and was a direct consequence of the actions of this government. As I've said on many occasions, I don't think it was mean-spirited and deliberate by any means. But I think it was almost inevitable that we would have a Walkerton happening because somebody somewhere along the line did not prevent the damaging cuts to the Ministry of the Environment and the drastic changes that were made in government policy that resulted in seven people dying from drinking the water in Walkerton and well over 1,000 people becoming seriously ill, some with consequences that may be for many years to come.

So I would like to see the report released immediately. As I indicated at the beginning of my remarks, I had a fear that the spin doctors within the government—not the members of the Legislature who are not in the cabinet, particularly, but the spin doctors of the government; you know, the people whom many of you on the backbenches don't like—were going to manipulate things to such an extent that it would be released when it was convenient to the government rather than when it was convenient to the people of Walkerton and the people of Ontario. That's why we have this resolution this afternoon. I'm hopeful that the government members will, as they have said they're going to, vote in favour of the resolution and that we can be assured that we're going to have—

Mr Spina: Convince us.

Mr Bradley: I think I've made a compelling case for it.

Last, I want to say this about the report. Yes, it's important to identify what happened because we want to avoid that kind of mistake in the future. What's equally important, and perhaps more important, is that the government act upon the recommendations of the commission of inquiry so that people are protected, so that the people of this province have clean, reliable, pure water to drink. That's what this afternoon is about and that is what we all seek to have in our province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to set out at the beginning of this debate that the NDP caucus will be supporting this particular resolution because we believe that at the end of the day it is important that we get to what is contained within the report from Justice Dennis O'Connor as quickly as it is issued. I was glad to see that yesterday the government seemed willing, by way of a unanimous consent motion, to allow that to happen. I thought it was kind of strange when the Liberals put forward a unanimous consent motion, the New Democrats said, "Yes, we're in agreement," the Tories said they were in agreement and then the Liberals withdrew the motion. I just wondered what that was all about.

I understand it's a bit of inside baseball, because it would have meant, because of the rules of this House, that the Liberals couldn't have their opposition day, but I think we might have been better served to do the unanimous consent motion when we knew we had a bird in the hand. I truly hope the government, at the end of this debate, will do what they said they would do yesterday and vote in support of the Liberal opposition motion, because certainly we as New Democrats yesterday were prepared to give unanimous consent and the Liberals withdrew, but that's another story. We're still prepared today to vote in favour of this particular motion.

I want to touch on a couple of the comments that were made by my good friend the member from Niagara—not from Niagara but from St Catharines; a good friend also lives in Niagara, Peter Kormos—Mr Bradley, because he raised something in his debate that I think we really need to have a discussion about in this Legislature—and this is meant to be a bit of a lecture to the Tory government and, I would argue, possibly some of the people within the Liberal caucus who tend to be more on the right of the political spectrum—and that is the role of government.

The Tories, on being elected in 1995, came in with their ideas, the mantra and the ideology of the right and said, "We're the government that's being elected to dismantle government." They were sort of like the anti-government party. They ran in 1995 and said, "If you elect us to government, we will come to government to straighten things out," as my good friend the member from wherever—I don't remember the riding, but it's BGMS—says. The point was, they were coming to government to dismantle government, because I have to say these Tories really have a problem with government. They see government as this big body that's intrusive, that gets in the way of business, gets in the way of

making Ontario work. Mike Harris and the rest of the ideologues within the Tory party, some Liberals at the federal level certainly and, I would argue, some at the provincial level, say, "If we could only get rid of a whole bunch of government, we would be so much better off. Life would be so great. We would be able to live so well because we wouldn't have all those bureaucrats, all that bureaucracy and all of those pesky laws getting in our way."

It makes me think a bit of a dictator. The dictator says, "That democracy, it just tends to get in the way of making things happen. Huh. Do away with it." Life is much easier when you're Stalin, Mao Ze-Dong or whomever. You just do what you want and get them all out of your way. You don't have to worry. In 1995 we got a chance to try that out. For the first time in the province's history, in recent memory—I shouldn't say "the first time," because unfortunately we've gone down this road before—we got a chance to see what this would look like after these Tories, these neo-con Alliance members, Stockwell Day types, Mike Harrisites, came to power. They got a chance to try it out and they came to government and said, "Away with all this bureaucracy." They invented the Red Tape Commission and by way of the Red Tape Commission, "Away with all those regulations. Be done with them. Off with their heads," type of thing. "Just get rid of it. It's in the way. Get rid of it."

Then they got to power and they said, "Oh, those pesky ministry types. You know those people who work at MOE, those bad Ministry of the Environment types and those bad bureaucrats at MNR? Do away with 50% of those. They only get in the way. After all," said Mike Harris, "they only get in the way of making things happen. They're a hindrance to business. They are just a layer of bureaucracy that we can't afford and that doesn't serve any useful good."

There was a little voice in the Legislature, nine New Democrats who stood in the Legislature and said, "Stop. Don't do this," and the Tories said, "Oh, you're the government of bureaucracy. You're the government of red tape. You're the government of big spending. Oh, we know what you're like. We tried it your way and it didn't work." Do you know what? Under our watch nobody died drinking water. No one. We understand, as New Democrats, as other governments before us did, before you neo-cons came along, that you absolutely have to have government in place to make sure the basics of making a modern society work are there, such as those pesky bureaucrats at MOE and MNR who were out there diligently every day, making sure you can pick up your glass of water, drink it and not worry about having to die in a community called Walkerton.

1600

I say to the government across the way—yes, it's meant as a bit of a lecture today—"We told you so." We told you when you started down this road of privatization of ministry services, 50% cuts of MOE staff, 50% cuts at MNR, the deregulation you did by way of the Red Tape Commission, your attitude where anybody within the

government who was an environmentalist had to duck because, God knows, Mike Harris didn't like you and you weren't about to become a target. We told you that you couldn't run government that way.

There is a useful purpose for government, and that's why in a modern society we have decided over the years to build something that's called government. We know that in the bad old days you couldn't drink water in many communities without dying. We know that in the bad old days we didn't have the protections we have when it comes to labour laws and such, and that if we want to have a civil, modern society, yes, you have to have government that organizes that. Because do you know what, friends? It's not going to happen on its own.

Civility is not something that just happens by chance, when it comes to treating each other decently as human beings and making sure we have proper rules by which we operate our communities, our provinces and our countries. It happens when logical human beings get elected and come to a Legislature or House of Commons or municipal government, look at an issue and say, "We have a problem," as they did in the history of the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, PEI and others when they looked at the water systems and said: "You can't drink water in those communities because it's unsafe. What shall we do?" So they created a public health unit.

In Ontario, the first one created was up in the city of Timmins. You had the specialists locally, in order to put in place the type of protections we needed to make sure the water was certainly safe when we drank it. And you had to have Ministries of the Environment, where you had the expertise to back up the services locally, so that when somebody called from Timmins, Mattice or Walkerton, somebody was at the other end answering the phone, saying "Hello, can I help you?" And in the end, that somebody with the expertise could go from the ministry to support the actions that were happening in the field. And you had to have the scientists working within the ministry who set the standards by which we made sure our drinking water was safe.

So I do say to you neo-cons across the way, "We told you so." It was the small voice of the New Democrats, because we were only nine in 1995 as we are now after the last election, who said, "You do this and we're going to end up in deep trouble, because we're not going to have the kind of protection we had."

When the report from Justice Dennis O'Connor comes in, it will be an interesting report. I look forward to reading it, because I expect—I'm not clairvoyant; I don't pretend I know exactly what's going to be written. But I would perfectly well expect that Mr Dennis O'Connor will assess some of the blame for this particular travesty on the policies of this government.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): Justice Dennis O'Connor.

Mr Bisson: Yes, good point. Justice Dennis O'Connor; I said it. Do you want me to say it again, Margaret, with feeling just for you? I will. You're my friend. I don't want to offend you in any way. I really don't.

Mrs Marland: Sorry, it's Mr Justice.

Mr Bisson: Mr Justice Dennis O'Connor, just to help you out, Margaret.

I say to the government members across the way that it proves something we've been saying from the very beginning; that is, there is a positive role for government. If government is not there organizing the type of services and support for infrastructure that is so necessary to operate our provincial services, they're not going to happen on their own.

So I say to the government across the way, here are a couple of things that I think you need to be doing. We got into the problem of Walkerton because you got rid of many of the services that were in place in order to protect our drinking water. We got into the problem of Walkerton much because you've done the type of cuts you did at the public health units, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources. What's even more galling is that you got into the business of cutting the capital dollars that were necessary in order to fund inadequate water systems that had to be upgraded because they were either not able to operate to the capacities they needed to operate at, or maybe in some situations they were possibly giving to a community water that may not have been safe.

When we were the government between 1990 and 1995, we created the water protection fund. The reason we did that was to put in place the capital dollars necessary so that municipalities across this province were able to say, "We have a problem with our drinking system, we have confirmed that by way of the experts at the Ministry of the Environment and the public health units and we need to do something in order to replace the aging water supply system." They would be able to come up with their share of the dollars, come to the provincial government and make an application for capital dollars so they would be able to find the means and resources to build those new water systems that are much needed in Ontario.

If you can do but one thing, I would ask you, why don't you restore the funding we had in place for the water protection fund that was put in place by the Bob Rae government and was eliminated by Mike Harris, one of the first things he did on getting here? I know the government is going to say—I can see them saying it—"We've got SuperBuild. We don't need the water protection fund because SuperBuild is just going to fix everything." I say to the government, all you've done with SuperBuild is to take all the capital dollars we had, divide them in half, put them in one pot and basically say, "Look how wonderful we are. We built this big pot in order to be able to fund things in Ontario when it comes to capital infrastructure." It's only half of what we had before and it means that in the competition to fund everything from sports complexes to municipal libraries to water systems, some things are going to lose out. One of those things is going to be water systems across the province.

I would argue that you need to have a dedicated fund, not a SuperBuild fund, such as we had created through

the Ontario Clean Water Agency when we, the NDP, were in government, and come back to a water protection fund in order to make sure that MOE has a pot of dollars that's available, that's consistent, so municipalities know how much is there so that they're able to apply to the ministry to get funded to rebuild their water systems when necessary.

Municipal governments are responsible. They understand that they're not all going to be able to be funded in one year. But if they know that there is a water protection fund in place and they know there's a reasonable chance that they're going to get funded in two, three or four years, they can at least plan. They can say in the town of Mattice or Smooth Rock Falls or wherever it might be, "We need to replace our water system or do improvements to it. We know that the cost is going to be \$800,000. It's going to be a 60-40 type of split," or whatever we're going to come up with for the split, "and we will budget accordingly, knowing that the province is going to come good for its share." The municipalities on their own can't fund it. They do not have the tax base, in many cases, to be able to fund entirely the type of work they've got to do to make their drinking water safe and make sure other infrastructures are in place within their communities.

I look at communities such as Mattice, Opasatika, Fauquier; there are many communities like that across the province. They don't have the industrial assessment to be able to get the dollars to put those things forward. That's why the province must play a role. So I say as a New Democrat that it's very important that we have in place dedicated funds to make sure there are dollars for those municipalities to apply for, to be able to put that in place.

The other positive thing I want to suggest to the government—because I believe as a New Democrat and as an opposition member that it's not my job to stand here and point a finger at you all the time. I love doing that every now and then because you certainly mess up enough and give me an opportunity, but I have to give you some recommendations of what I think you could be doing. Here is another thing we could be doing that's very easy to do. It takes some planning. You're not going to be able to turn this overnight, but if you give yourselves 12, 14 or 16 months, you can make this happen. I'll give you an example of where it could make a difference.

Just recently we read—I think it was on Saturday or Sunday—in newspapers that we have another E coli problem in this province. This time it has to do with foods. We're not quite sure exactly what happened, but more or less in the handling of foods in restaurants and other areas there have been a number of cases—I think the number is 12—where we've had E coli incidents appear again in Ontario.

I want to say upfront that it's not the water. Let's not get people all panicked. It ain't the water, from what we can figure out at this point. But we suspect, by way of whoever is left out there to do the job these days, that it

comes from food handling. One of the difficulties we're having is that we don't have the number of inspectors we need out in the field to do the kind of work that has to be done to identify where these problems come from.

So I would say to the government that you'll have to recommit to hire back many of the inspectors you laid off at the Ministry of the Environment, that the public health units have had to let go and that you let go by way of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, to have the inspectors in place to go out there and inspect those restaurants and inspect the places where they handle food, be it at the farm gate or all the way to the restaurant or the grocery store, so that we're sure the food we're eating and the food we're selling in Ontario is safe for humans to eat.

1610

Now we're starting to worry because we've seen that there have been another 12 cases where people in Ontario have gone into a restaurant somewhere and have E coli. I think this particular strain is E coli 0157, which has shown up by way of tests when these people have become ill.

What I'm saying to you is that we need to make sure we have inspectors in place, that the way we find out is not by somebody showing up at the emergency ward in Timmins or at Wellesley, and all of a sudden you've got an E coli case. That's not the way we should find this out. We should find out by knowing there is the number of inspectors out there.

I know what the government is going to say: "Oh, a waste of money. More bureaucrats out there. Oh, God, don't you understand it, you silly New Democrats? You can't be spending money on a bureaucracy, all these terrible employees out there doing it. Don't you know if we privatize it, it will be better?" I know that's what you're going to tell me. You can skip your rotation. I know that's what your speech is going to be.

But I want to say to you in all sincerity that that ain't the case. You do have to have those people out there. Why? You understand, my good friend Mr Tilson—and I don't know your riding or else I would use the name of it. You're a lawyer and you understand. What is the best deterrent to somebody committing a crime? It is the fear of getting caught.

Mrs Marland: Cook the food.

Mr Bisson: Margaret says, "Cook the food." Well, I only wish it were that simple.

I say to you across the way, people will not go out and break the law, by and large, if they fear that they're going to get caught. It's the same thing when it comes to the issue of inspecting food or inspecting a water system in Ontario. If I'm a handler of foods, be it in the restaurant business or in the merchandising or selling of food, and I've got some practices that may not be so healthy—as my good friend Margaret has said, the whole issue of not properly cooking food, or some butcher drops the meat on the ground, picks it up, and maybe it picked up some contamination—and I think I'm not going to get caught, I am not as worried about what just happened. But if people know there are inspectors out there who are

watching them—yes, they are on their behinds, making sure there are people who are inspecting—they are less likely to do those kinds of things that would infect our food or our water supplies.

I say to the government, by way of another suggestion from us, the New Democrats, that you have to have publicly controlled and publicly funded inspectors in the field who are inspecting the systems out there when it comes to handling food or when it comes to water. If you don't have the inspectors out there, there is a sense among those who handle or distribute the food or whatever way they're involved in it, "If I have a chance of not getting caught, maybe I don't have to be so vigilant."

I say to the government, your neo-conservative attitude when it comes to government—less government is better—really doesn't work.

Mrs Marland: Neo-cons.

Mr Bisson: Neo-con, neo-conservative or, as we would say in French, *néoconservateur*, and if you translate that properly you'll understand what I just said: *néo-con-servateur*. The translator is laughing. I can see her.

I just say to you that it doesn't work. That whole agenda of saying that less government leads to more efficiencies, leads to a better way of life and a more fiscally responsible way of running things at the end has a cost associated with it. And I argue that in the end it probably didn't save a heck of a lot of money, when you really look at it. There are more possibilities for things to go wrong in the systems today. So one of the things I want to suggest that the government could do to ensure that citizens in Ontario don't get ill when they eat food or drink water is to make sure you have the people in place to inspect.

The last point I want to make is this: when it comes to one of the suggestions you can do, you can rehire those five scientists you fired, the very people who developed the test to detect E coli in Ontario, the people who did the scientific type of work that allows us to identify the very type of bacteria that killed people in Walkerton. You fired them. You got rid of them. "Oh," the government said, it wasn't them, it was OPSEU. Give me a break. Like they went to a membership meeting and said "I oppose this motion. I want to be fired." Give me a break, government. That's not the way it happens. You're the guys in control. You sit at the cabinet table. You guys make the decision. It's you guys that fired the scientists in the government. I can't get over that: the government said it was OPSEU. Give me a break.

I just cannot believe it. It's like the little story when you're growing up: the kid flushes the toilet because he blocked it up. Mother catches him in the bathroom and sees the water coming up over the toilet and goes to the child and says, "Son, did you do that?" "No, it wasn't me," and he's the only kid in the bathroom. That's what this government is like. You guys do things and you won't take responsibility for them even when you're caught. These scientists were fired by the provincial government. You're the people who pay the salaries, you're the guys who sign the cheques, and you did the firing.

Don't come to me and say it was OPSEU. Wait until I tell my friend Leah Casselman. She won't ever forgive you for that one.

I just say to you, one of the things the government could do is to make sure we have the scientific staff in place in Ontario who are able to do the scientific work that's necessary to identify the type of bacteria and the type of testing that's needed in order to make sure we don't end up in a situation such as we did in Walkerton.

Those are three recommendations that we're making to you today as New Democrats. We're saying (1) you need to put in place a water protection fund, dedicated dollars to make sure municipalities have a partner to be able to go out and fund the type of infrastructure they need to make their water systems safe or that they are able to make additions to water systems; (2) you have to have inspectors in place out there to do two things: yes, inspect and make sure we end up in a situation where we know if something is going wrong but, more important, to offer a deterrent to those people in the food-handling industry who may not be as responsible as we want and by way of that irresponsibility may put people in harm's way; and (3) a simple thing that you can do—it's a no-brainer—is you can call Leah Casselman. I've got her phone number. I'm sure she'd be willing to help you. Just give her a call. Hire the scientists that you've fired to make sure we've got the scientific staff to be able to do the type of tests that have to be done.

I guess the other point I'd like to make is—this is a political observation, and this is really quite amazing because it's like on the way out Mike Harris has all of a sudden just realized a couple of things. I remember being in government when we made the argument around health care that the Mulroney government had reduced health funding in the province from 50% to about 20% when we were there, and then eventually Chrétien brought it down all the way to what it is now. At the time, Bob Rae and myself, as a member of the NDP government, got up and said we needed the help of the opposition parties to convince, first, Mulroney and then Mr Chrétien to restore the funding that we needed to fund health care in Ontario. I remember when Mike Harris was saying, "But Mr NDP government, your problem is not a fiscal problem of revenue; you've got a spending problem." "Stop whining," he'd say. Now I see Mike Harris running to Ottawa and whining that he's got a problem. Because he's given away billions of dollars in tax cuts in Ontario, he's saying to the federal government, "Give me more money. I've got no more. I can't fund water testing. I can't fund the reconstruction of water plants because I've given it all away." He's after the government, saying, "Hey, come on and help us. You've got to take your responsibility."

Well, I say to the government, practise what you preach. Go to the municipalities and become a real partner. Those municipalities out there can't do it on their own and they're encouraged when they see their Premier, Mike Harris, go to Ottawa to say to them, "Help us with a problem that we've got. We need you to play your role

and to fund the government, to fund services here in the province of Ontario.” Instead, what they get is a provincial government that turns around and says, “But at the end, we’re not going to be that partner when it comes to you. We’re not going to practise what we preach. We may say one thing to the federal government, but we really don’t mean it when we’re talking to our municipal partners.” To that, I say the government is wrong.

I just conclude by saying we will support this resolution. We have made three very concrete recommendations to the government when it comes to how we can make water systems safer in Ontario and how we can make the foods we eat in this province much safer by way of making sure we do those things that we recommended, and we say to the government we will be voting along with the Liberals on their opposition day motion today to make sure that—

Mrs Marland: Justice Dennis O’Connor.

1620

Mr Bisson: Make sure I get this one right, Margaret. Pay attention. I want you to pay attention.

Mrs Marland: I’m paying attention.

Mr Bisson: Our good friend the Chief Justice, Mr Dennis O’Connor, when the report comes out, that in fact that report is released—

Mrs Marland: Sorry, it’s Mr Justice.

Mr Bisson: Mr Justice O’Connor. I want to make sure I have it right for you, Margaret, and that at the end, when that report is done, it is released as quickly as possible.

With that, Mr Speaker, I want to thank you so much for having an opportunity to debate this today.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): Yesterday, the government House leader, Mrs Ecker, rose in her place and suggested to the House that we were in favour, the government, members on this side, were in support of the resolution as put forward by the Liberal opposition and asked for unanimous consent that it carry.

Interjections.

Mr Tilson: I don’t want to interrupt you people at all.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Capture us with your insight and your flair.

Mr Tilson: Indeed.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey is trying to make some points; perhaps we should let him.

Mr Tilson: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your assistance. We are here today, so obviously that consent was not given, but I will reiterate on behalf of this side that the members on this side will be supportive of the resolution. We will be voting in favour of it when that time comes.

Interjections.

Mr Tilson: Mr Speaker, I’m having an awful time here. I’ve got some things to say.

In the week of the Walkerton outbreak, clear, decisive action was required to restore the public’s confidence in the drinking water system. The government took many

important steps to improve the protection of Ontario’s water supplies and thereby enhance public confidence.

First and foremost, the government pledged to do whatever was necessary to help the people of Walkerton. The Premier, a number of cabinet ministers and the Minister of the Environment visited Walkerton to learn first-hand about the community’s needs.

Over the past 18 months the government’s comprehensive support for Walkerton has included remediation of the Walkerton waterworks, the dedication of additional public health resources, the provision of bottled water, emergency funds and financial compensation for the residents of Walkerton, immediate and long-term assistance to the businesses and financial aid to the municipality.

A further significant step to restore public confidence in Ontario’s drinking water was the establishment in June of last year, in June of 2000, of the public inquiry presided over by Mr Justice Dennis R. O’Connor as commissioner. The government appointed this commissioner for two reasons. First, we wanted to find out what caused this tragedy. Second, we wanted to learn how to prevent a similar tragedy in the future. So, through comprehensive terms of reference, the Walkerton inquiry has a mandate to inquire into the causes of events in Walkerton, including the effect, if any, of government policies, procedures and practices and to explore any other relevant matters to ensure the safety of Ontario’s drinking water.

The inquiry, Mr Speaker, has a dual task of looking into why the Walkerton tragedy occurred and making recommendations designed to prevent a similar tragedy from occurring in the future. The inquiry’s terms of reference provide explicitly that all provincial ministries, boards, agencies and commissions, including the Cabinet Office and the Premier’s office, are to assist in the inquiry to the fullest extent.

From the outset of the inquiry, the government has co-operated fully to ensure that this commitment has been kept. The government has provided the inquiry with the resources necessary to do its work, including funding for counsel, for staff, for investigators, for expert advisers and for other services.

The government has co-operated with the inquiry by producing over one million documents. Over 272,000 of these documents have been electronically imaged at the commission’s request. The commission has provided approximately 41,000 documents to parties with standing at the inquiry.

Some 54 current and former government employees have appeared as witnesses before the inquiry, as well as two cabinet ministers and the Premier of the province of Ontario.

The inquiry’s terms of reference authorize the commissioner to make recommendations regarding funding for parties who have been granted standing but would not be able to participate without financial assistance. To date, the government has accepted all of the commissioner’s recommendations for funding.

To dispel any hesitation individuals might feel about coming forward to assist the inquiry, legislation was passed in June 2000 to protect employees who participate in public inquiries from any workplace reprisals. This protection applies not only to Ontario government employees, but to non-government employees as well.

In announcing that the government had established the inquiry, the Premier stated, "The families of Walkerton demand answers. The Ontario public demands answers. I demand answers and that's why I've been calling for a full, open and public review of what went wrong and why. We have a responsibility to the victims and their families to get to the bottom of this tragedy. We will not rest until we do so."

When the then Attorney General, Jim Flaherty, announced the appointment of Mr Justice O'Connor as commissioner, he stated, "With a distinguished commissioner and broad terms of reference, we have now established a process that will get the answers demanded by the victims and their families and the Ontario public. We will not rest until we find out what went wrong in Walkerton and why, so that similar tragedies can be prevented in the future."

The government has confidence that Justice O'Connor, after almost 10 months of hearings, testimony from close to 100 witnesses and the review of hundreds of thousands of documents, will provide the answers the people of Walkerton and the people of the province of Ontario are seeking. I will say this to the House on behalf of my colleague the Attorney General, Mr Young, who is representing Ontario at a federal-provincial-territorial justice meeting and could not be here today: we support releasing Mr Justice O'Connor's report immediately after it is received.

I would like to spend a few moments discussing what steps the government has already taken to improve water quality since the Walkerton tragedy. The government launched Operation Clean Water in August 2000, which, among other things, committed \$240 million to help smaller municipalities and rural areas upgrade their waterworks. A key aspect of Operation Clean Water was the enactment of the drinking water protection regulation which establishes mandatory and more stringent requirements for waterworks operators. We passed the drinking water protection regulation to improve protection of the health of Ontarians and to make the province's drinking water requirements among the toughest in the world.

We also proposed the drinking water protection regulation for designated facilities to ensure that people who are less resistant to contaminants in drinking water, such as seniors and children, are better protected.

We are implementing the \$6-million provincial groundwater monitoring network. We inspected all municipal water treatment plants in the province—more than 650—to ensure compliance with provincial legislation, and we are committed to doing annual inspections at these plants. In addition, the government engaged Valerie Gibbons, a senior partner in Executive Resource Group and a former deputy minister, to examine the operation of

the Ministry of the Environment and to make recommendations to the government to improve its operation. But as we strengthen protection for our drinking water, let's keep in mind that we are building a system that until May of 2000 had served us well. In making changes, it is important to recognize and preserve what is valuable.

1630

I would like to end my comments this afternoon the same way I began, and that is by repeating that the government supports the immediate release of the commissioner's report. Given the wide consensus among the parties in the House this afternoon, I would like at this time to seek unanimous consent to have the question put immediately without further debate on Mr Bradley's motion in order to demonstrate unanimous support for this motion.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Tilson has asked for unanimous consent that the question be now put. Agreed? No.

Further debate?

Interjection.

Mr Conway: I want to speak. I think there is going to be unanimity, and that's to our collective credit. But, God knows, we get not that many opportunities in what appears to be an ever-truncated legislative session, and I for one don't intend to surrender my right to speak on behalf of my constituents about a matter of urgent and pressing necessity.

Let me say some things at the outset. I strongly support, as I believe all members will, the resolution standing in the name of my friend and seatmate the member for St Catharines. It's a right and proper thing that we should agree unanimously to support this. Quite frankly, I cannot imagine that a contrary position was ever contemplated.

I want to say to the government, in a congratulatory way, that I certainly applaud their response by selecting Mr Justice Dennis O'Connor to head this very important public inquiry. I'd like to think I had something to do with pressuring the government into a judicial inquiry as opposed to some of the earlier alternative measures that were being contemplated. But in fairness, I want to congratulate the Premier and the government bench for doing the right thing insofar as not only appointing a judicial inquiry, but selecting an outstanding jurist to head that inquiry. It would be wrong for any of us here, myself included, to prejudge the inquiry. I don't know what they're going to find, but I certainly want to know that as soon as that report is done, it's going to be released into the public domain.

I almost stood up here the other day—and I say, perhaps a little bit scoldingly to both sides of the aisle, that on this Walkerton matter I get very angry when I think politicians are playing evident games. If there was ever a serious matter before this chamber, it's got to be Walkerton. Seven innocent people died, thousands of innocent people were sickened, some of them in a very serious way. According to Professor Livernois, in his report released just yesterday I believe, there is now estimated to be something like \$65 million worth of

direct economic loss or cost associated with the tragedy in Bruce county, in Walkerton, in the spring-summer of 2000.

So this is a very serious, troubling matter. We, as responsible citizens in this Legislature, have in a very bipartisan way surely an obligation to show the public out there, especially the families of the deceased at or near Walkerton, that we are going to do everything we possibly can to ensure that whatever happened will not happen again. Again, it's not for me to say who is responsible. That clearly is primarily the responsibility of Mr Justice O'Connor. But we know this much: governments, local, provincial and national, are not going to be allowed the easy ride we all had before the Walkerton tragedy struck 18 months ago. There is abroad in the land a very seriously heightened public consciousness about water and water quality, about these mysterious murderous bacteria, E coli, that can so silently kill. We, as community leaders, are going to be expected to show the way and do our part to protect the public interest in this respect.

I wanted today to take a few moments to highlight a couple of observations that have been brought to my attention as a member from rural Ontario. I'm just going to cite a couple of examples. In the last few months I've had a couple of my smaller municipalities—several of my smaller municipalities but I'm going to mention a couple—draw their concerns to my attention.

Do you know that in the village of Killaloe, population approximately 700, there are about 120 households and businesses connected to a communal water system, 120 hookups in that beautiful Ottawa Valley village? The municipal leadership in the now amalgamated township of Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards has been told that the new water-testing requirements are going to impose a new cost of approximately \$18,000 a year on the 120 ratepayers who support directly, through their user charges, the Killaloe water system. That's \$18,000 a year in new water-testing costs spread across 120 accounts. That's \$150 a year in additional charges to the people who are expected to pay at the local level for the Killaloe waterworks, and that's just for the new testing requirements, on an annual basis.

Up Highway 60, in the village of Barry's Bay, I'm told by Reeve Schweig of the newly amalgamated township of Madawaska Valley in which the old village of Barry's Bay is located that they have an estimated cost of somewhere between \$2 million and \$2.5 million to bring the water plant of the village of Barry's Bay into conformity. In the village of Barry's Bay the population, at a maximum, is about 1,200 to 1,500. A \$2.5-million water treatment upgrading cost? Let's assume for the sake of argument that the cost is going to be shared equally one third, one third and one third between the local, provincial and federal governments. At a one-third cost, the village of Barry's Bay in the newly amalgamated township of Madawaska Valley has a capital cost of some three quarters of a million dollars on its own account just to bring its water treatment plant into conformity. For

your information, the village of Barry's Bay—and this in fact may be the entire township of Madawaska Valley; I'm not sure—has a borrowing capacity of \$700,000 and they already have an existing debt of about \$300,000.

You can see in those two examples, one in the village of Killaloe and the other in the village of Barry's Bay, how the new requirements, which we surely will all support, to bring our communal water systems to a newly acceptable standard are going to cost very substantial dollars.

My friend from Caledon will know, the member from north Perth will know, as well as does the Deputy Speaker, as does our friend Arnott and my friend the government whip, all of us in rural, small-town Ontario know that in these small, rural communities you've got a very limited tax base. These costs, particularly for water treatment and sewage treatment facilities, are enormous. Let me repeat, in Killaloe, just the new water-testing requirements are going to impose a new \$150 annual charge on the users, and that's just for water testing. In Barry's Bay, apparently, they're going to have to come up locally, if they get a very good formula, with something in the order of three quarters of a million local dollars just to bring their water treatment plant into conformity with new standards.

1640

Thanks to my constituents in the Renfrew area, I've got a very good letter from Harry Vibe of RR 1, Renfrew, who writes on behalf of a number of the residents of the Pleasant View mobile home park in the Renfrew area of my constituency. They are pointing out to the Ministry of the Environment and to me as their local member, "Has anybody given any thought," Mr Vibe writes, "about the impact of these new requirements on smaller mobile home parks in rural Ontario, campgrounds, many of which are operated by Her Majesty's provincial government?" Mr Vibe is right in saying, "Be careful, governments. Make sure you do not expect from property taxpayers, many of us on modest incomes, costs that we simply cannot afford."

Yes, there is abroad in the land and in this Legislature and in the government party, as we speak, a very active debate about choices and consequences. We've got the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health saying, "It's time to cut even more deeply into the tax system." Well, if that's what you want to do, you have to understand that \$2.2 billion worth of corporate tax cuts are going to have to be paid for somehow.

I understand that there's an honest and significant debate to be had there, but on the part of my rural constituents throughout the Ottawa Valley, they would want me to say two things as I resume my seat this afternoon: "Absolutely, Conway, we want you to support any resolution that brings the O'Connor report into the public domain immediately upon its completion." But they would also say to me, "Will you please tell not just your colleagues in the government but your colleagues in both of the opposition parties that in rural Ontario these new costs we are contemplating toward a very good public

purpose—safe and secure water and safe and secure disposition of waste materials—have got to be paid for in a way that is fair and equitable to people living on the farm and in rural villages, hamlets and, yes, even in small towns and smaller cities.”

I just want to say to the government and to my colleagues on this side of the aisle that there are altogether too many indications that the provincial government, whether it's in nutrient management or in a host of other related activities, is being very quick to set significantly higher standards that must be met by the community. But insofar as assisting smaller rural communities with what are clearly onerous, if not backbreaking, local costs is concerned, the Ontario government has been very unwilling, almost reluctant, to offer a helping hand that we have offered in the past, over the decades, and without which, quite frankly, in the future altogether too many communities in my county of Renfrew are simply not going to be able to meet and master with their own resources.

With those words, Mr Speaker, I'm happy to resume my seat.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to add a few words in support of the resolution of my good friend and colleague from St Catharines, Jim Bradley, who arguably is probably the best Minister of the Environment—there have been some very good ones—this province has ever seen. I think he's bang on in terms of insisting that we get an opportunity today to articulate for the record our history of concern with respect to what has happened.

I got to know Mr Bradley quite well during my by-election. Trusting government was already a major issue in the riding of Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. It was a government that talked at some length, notwithstanding our views on it, about not inflicting amalgamation on communities against their will, and that had even run on that platform only to see that changed. But to that whole mix was added this issue of Walkerton. In a much more dramatic way, the issue of trust became an everyday discussion at the door. People simply didn't believe that in a province as rich as Ontario, we would ever see a situation where we'd have death by drinking water.

Lest we forget, it's important to recall some of the history. I do this in the context of acknowledging that in some instances, while no one is guilty, we're all responsible and we need to reflect on that. It's also done very much in the context that while I believe we should only have the government we need, we must insist on all the government we require. If the tragedy in Walkerton has taught us nothing else, I think it should have taught us that. History certainly is instructive, and I just want to cover off some of that if I can.

Some six years ago, before the government started fixing things over there, the MOE conducted regular water tests that were analyzed in an MOE lab. They averaged about 400,000 tests a year. If they discovered a failed test, they'd take immediate and, in most cases,

coordinated action. In September 1996, all MOE labs were closed and responsibility for testing drinking water was delegated to municipalities. There was some eight weeks' notice; very little, if any, consultation with municipalities; no independent review of the availability or costs of private labs; and even no requirement that municipalities use accredited labs, if you can believe it.

On the maintenance and capital spending side, six years ago we saw about one third of the province's water and sewer plants being provincially owned and operated. Capital funding for new water plants and maintenance of existing plants exceeded \$200 million a year. All of that is changed. That too was downloaded. The member from the Renfrew area mentioned trailer parks. That was a significant downloading on municipalities. More recently, we've seen the downloading to municipalities of responsibility for provincially owned water and sewer plants and a virtual drying up of resources for major capital expenditures.

On the inspection, testing and monitoring side, six years ago MOE had a budget of some \$344 million and a staff of 2,500. Since then, that's been cut by 40% and a third of the staff have been laid off. Inspection is so darned critical. It's one thing to trumpet new initiatives and new laws, but if you don't have the trained expertise and staff available to enforce those new directions, they aren't helpful at all.

I was pleased to hear the member from the Orangeville area—we have family up that way—saying his government won't rest until this has been sorted out. I am hopeful that when Mr Justice O'Connor's report is released, one of the things we might consider would be an all-party committee, a couple of dedicated people who can rise above some of the partisanship that sometimes characterizes this place, who might come together to look at how we can shepherd that report through the Legislative Assembly and perhaps, in so doing, restore some of the fundamental trust that Ontarians tell us they've lost in their government.

It's been said that good judgment is based on experience, and experience invariably on bad judgment. Without chronicling some of the pitfalls and perhaps errors of previous governments, which one could easily do, perhaps it suffices to say that those of us who take our responsibilities seriously—and I want to suggest that on a good day that's everybody in this House—would make a commitment to learning from mistakes that have been made in the past.

1650

All that having been said, municipalities that have been referenced several times in the debate are looking for partners. They're looking for someone to walk the walk. They're looking for someone to share the burden. Surely that's what government ought to be about, how we together celebrate our successes and share one another's burdens. Sometimes the sharing of that burden is done in very practical ways through funding partnerships or what have you.

We certainly have a lot of new challenges ahead. This government in particular has been talking about the need

for a groundwater management and protection strategy for some time and legislation to protect drinking water, but we've now got issues with hazardous and toxic waste. I'd like to suggest that we, as a Legislative Assembly, actually commit to a new annual state of the environment with some specific and very pointed steps we can take.

I know we've heard from both the auditor and the Environmental Commissioner, and there are lots of comments I could read into the record, but that wouldn't be particularly helpful today. People are looking for this Legislative Assembly to point direction, not fingers. In that context, I'd just like to take the last minute or so that I have to make a couple of personal observations, if I can. I know everybody's interested in hearing this.

I would like to suggest that I'm hopeful that one of the recommendations that may be made is that we can look at the creation of a water utilities board or perhaps a series of water utilities commissions that would be organized based on watershed—there are some 37 watersheds in Ontario—working in partnership with our conservation authorities, perhaps dealing with that uncomfortable issue of the private-public partnership mix there, with conservation of our most precious asset, the most precious liquid resource we have, as its fundamental goal.

I would lift those ideas up to members of this Legislative Assembly and commit on my part and on the part of members of this House to working toward making sure—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I'm not going to take too long today to speak to this motion, because we on this side of the House agree with the motion and in fact had every intention of releasing the report from the Walkerton inquiry as soon as it became available. That, I think, speaks to the openness with which we've approached this entire situation.

Members opposite like to engage in some revisionist history about forcing, and the Liberals slap themselves on the back, congratulating themselves for the inquiry occurring, when in actual fact I believe the Premier initially offered to have an inquiry, headed by the members of this assembly. The Liberals couldn't trust the members of this assembly to have that and wanted to have a broader public inquiry. We on this side of the aisle had absolutely no concern about that whatsoever, and I think the very next day the Premier came out and said we were going to have a full public inquiry with Mr O'Connor as the head of that inquiry. It's funny that sometimes the Liberals, when they know we're going to come forward with a policy on something, usually try to talk about it the day before or two days before, and then when we introduce that policy, slap themselves on the back and try to say they pressured the government into that position.

It was kind of humorous one day when Mr McGuinty talked about needing more choice in education. About a month later, when this government, through the budget, introduced education choice, they jumped up to clap Mr

McGuinty on the back and congratulate him. They sure backed off that congratulatory pat on the back for Mr McGuinty about a day or two later when their friends in the teachers' unions said, "You can't support that tax credit, because we don't like that form of choice in education." They get themselves in trouble every now and then.

Another concern I have that I want to talk about is, over the past couple of months, usually the Liberal opposition would get up and complain that the government and particularly sometimes the Premier's office wasn't being forthcoming or wasn't cooperating with the inquiry. It's a terribly false allegation. A similarly false allegation was leveled in the Ipperwash case and it's just harmful to the process. It misleads the public.

If I could just give you some background on what role the Premier's office has actually played and what requests were made of them for information in the Walkerton inquiry. On October 30, 2000, the Premier's office received a document request from the O'Connor commission. According to the commission, the document search was to cover a wide period, April 1, 1993, to December 1, 2000, inclusive. They said it would request all documents relevant to the subject matter of the inquiry. So the employees of the Premier's office did searches, including e-mail, computer hard drives, paper documents, written notes—all files.

There were three phases: from December 2000 to January 2001; another phase; March 2001; and a third, June 2001. The searches were all conducted as directed. The Premier's office has certified that all requested documents and all relevant documents have in fact been produced. I believe at least nine boxes of Premier's office records were produced to the commission, so there's absolutely no justification for members opposite to ever stand up and say there wasn't full and complete cooperation on this side of the aisle with the inquiry. As I said, in a similar situation earlier this year, the court actually ruled that the similarly false allegations about missing Ipperwash documents were to be removed from the court files.

We're going to support this resolution. We intended to release the inquiry right away anyway. I just wanted to get on the record that I think it's hurtful and harmful that, in a situation like this, members opposite try to score cheap political points by making false allegations and I hope that they cease and desist from that.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): At the risk of being accused of making cheap political points, the fact of matter is that I would completely disagree with the member and I think when the history of this is written in detail, as it will be, it will be shown that the government had absolutely no intention at the outset of going into a public inquiry.

I grant you that the government moved fast once they sized things up and realized where they were, the amount of pressure. I wouldn't be the least bit surprised if there was a snap poll done to get a sense of the mood of the province. But if we recall, the government's initial

counter-response to the pressure to have accountability here was, I believe, through some form of legislative committee. That was their first reaction and, at that, they were trumpeting how much they were jumping out in front of the process of providing accountability. As we know, that sounds good, but all committees of this place are totally run by the majority and the majority are always the government. So of course they would want it to go there.

When they were finally pressured further, that that's not good enough, then they made the change. I realize at this stage we can debate that ad nauseam, but the fact of the matter is that I think when people take the time down the road to look back, study the media, study the Hansards, both printed and electronic, and get a sense of what happened, they'll realize the government was very much pushed into this public inquiry. This is not the way they wanted to go.

Further to that, I think it speaks volumes, given that the indication I'm getting—now, they may change this in a hurry—is that the government is finished speaking. They've got more time on the clock, but the last word I got as of a few moments ago was that they weren't going to put up any more speakers. That's a little unusual on an opposition day; not totally unheard of, but unusual. But when it's the government doing that, it says one thing and one thing only. It says this government wants anything to do with Walkerton off the public agenda as quickly as possible. If that means that they can save even 40 minutes on the clock today to prevent 40 minutes of discussion about Walkerton, about unsafe drinking water, about innocent Ontarians dying, they're going to take it. By not speaking, what they do is force an earlier vote, because we have a few moments left on the clock. The official opposition has concluded their time, and upon the conclusion of the third party's time, either the government puts up another member and continues to give this the public debate it deserves, or their priority agenda gets met and that is: end this discussion, force the vote early, adjourn the House early and talk about something else tonight and pray, just pray, that Ontarians forget about this for as long as possible. I think that's unfortunate, to say the least.

1700

So when my friend the previous speaker talks about scoring cheap political points, let's be sure that he understands the kind of glass house he lives in before he starts throwing stones around.

I want to talk about just a couple of things in the time that I have. One of them is the fact that the government keeps talking about—and again, as I've said, I can't count how many times the government talks one game, they talk one world, and they legislate and govern in a completely different fashion. When they talk about wanting to do something about learning their lessons and providing the safest drinking water possible anywhere on the planet, they refuse to do the first and most obvious thing they should, and that's to enact a law called the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Mr McMeekin: Pretty simple.

Mr Christopherson: "Pretty simple," says my friend. Absolutely. Very straightforward. The fact that they aren't doing it screams volumes. We've heard government members in the past say, "We don't need it because it's covered in another piece of regulation. This is just a political document. It really doesn't do anything." Yet the Environmental Commissioner said in his most recent annual report that the Safe Drinking Water Act, as proposed by my colleague from Toronto-Danforth, Marilyn Churley, would give Ontarians rights they do not now enjoy. So if their whole argument in not passing a Safe Drinking Water Act in Ontario is that those protections are already covered elsewhere, the fact that the Environmental Commissioner has taken the legs out from under that argument, in my opinion, leaves them groundless. You have no reason, no excuse whatsoever, for not enacting a Safe Drinking Water Act except that you don't want to do it.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): How much will it cost?

Mr Christopherson: There we go. There's the member from Perth-Middlesex busy writing away at his desk and he looks up long enough to say, "How much is it going to cost?" I'll bet it would cost less than Walkerton is costing. And there are dollar figures that don't equate on the bottom line. When you talk to the family members of young kids who are going to have an illness for their entire life—

Mr Johnson: I'm not hard of hearing. I can hear you.

Mr Christopherson: You must be hard of hearing. You don't listen.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Perth-Middlesex will come to order. One member at a time has the floor. All discussions should be through the Speaker.

Mr Christopherson: I'm not surprised at the response. If you think you can just heckle out something in this place and you're not going to be called on it, you've got another think coming. The fact of the matter is, when we talk about the Safe Drinking Water Act, when one of you in the governing party says, "How much is it going to cost?" and it's put back across the House as a reason for not doing anything, yes, I'm going to get angry and yes, I'm going to get loud.

If you want to talk about dollars, we're finding out right now. Yesterday's clippings—I'm sure among that mass of paper on your desk somewhere are yesterday's news clippings, and they talk about the cost. So far the cost is upwards of \$165 million. I can't imagine that the people of Ontario, if you posed the question to them and said, "Do you want a Safe Drinking Water Act? It's going to cost \$165 million. Do you still want the government to do it?"—I'll bet you nine out of 10 Ontarians say, "Give me my clean water." But why are they worried about how much it costs? Because you've given away so many billions in corporate tax cuts that you're wondering where you're going to get the money from. I

understand that dilemma, but you made the problem; you made the choice. You decided that corporate tax cuts were more important than safe drinking water. In fact, we already have evidence of that, don't we? For those people who thought, again, that the tax cuts were such a wonderful thing, that, "Boy, just give me that money because I know it's all just waste out there"—a message that this government pushed and promoted—"Get rid of big government," well, guess what? Part of big government is testing to make sure that we've got clean drinking water; it's to make sure that we can breathe the air and that we can live on the land without our kids getting sick and dying. That's part of public service; that's part of government. You made anything to do with government seem evil and bad and wasteful, and then you went a-slashing—slash, slash, slash.

One of the things in this area that they slashed and burned was a provincial water protection fund. Yes, that's a fund that gave out not just tens of millions of dollars—hundreds of millions of dollars. Why? When the NDP was in power, we spent hundreds of millions of dollars through that fund—there goes the government now, bobbing their heads up and down, nudging each other, saying, "See, yeah, there they go again. See, that's what happened. They spent money." Yes. I'm proud to stand here and tell you that we authorized hundreds of millions of dollars to the provincial water protection fund, because do you know what it did? Its sole purpose was to help municipalities ensure that because of the high cost they could still provide clean water to their citizens. I would much rather see hundreds of millions of dollars spent to upgrade municipal infrastructure, to ensure and provide safe, clean drinking water for our families, than give another corporate tax cut to folks who don't need it. I would much rather see that money spent on the provision of clean water.

So when we say things like, "An active safe drinking water act in Ontario," and the government says, "How much is it going to cost?" that's really what this is all about. I, like my friends, have no idea what Mr Justice O'Connor is going to come out with in his report in terms of how directly culpable you are. I don't know. I'll be shocked if all those cuts you made had absolutely no impact. You can't carve out 30% to 40% of a budget, fire 30% to 40% of the staff and expect that you're going to get the same performance. When your public service performance, in this case, is to ensure, monitor and test water, air and land, in my mind there shouldn't even be a debate as to whether that should be funded or whether there ought to be more corporate tax cuts in Ontario. That shouldn't even be a debate, let alone having to worry about the outcome of that debate.

I want to remind the government that all of this should be in all of your minds in the context of the up to \$5 billion that your budget chief is saying you're going to have to trim from our expenditures. Why? Because you refused to back off on the corporate tax cuts. They are above and beyond everything else.

Now, I suppose if the report comes out from Mr Justice O'Connor that a lot of your cuts were in any way

a part of the results of the tragedy at Walkerton, a lot of things are going to happen. There will be a lot of implications. One of them, I would hope, is a rethinking of where your priorities are. Are they going to be more corporate tax cuts, or are you going to start to take your responsibilities to provide protection to the public seriously?

1710

What I can't understand is that they like to tell everybody they're the great law-and-order party, and that means public safety. I can't think of anything that has more to do with ensuring public safety than ensuring the provision of clean water. But somehow they don't make the linkage. If, instead of lab coats, we put the water inspectors in uniforms, would you feel better about it? We can do that if that's what it takes. But somehow someone being assaulted on the street doesn't equate with a child drinking water from the tap in Ontario and dying. Why? Why aren't they both public safety? You're talking about the protection of citizens. Why does that end with thugs on the street? Bacteria kill people too.

Now they don't want to talk so much, I say to my friend from St Catharines. Before, they had so much to say, lots of heckling, lots of comments. Now they've got nothing to say.

I would think if they took their time that they had, they'd be talking about SuperBuild. "Don't worry, SuperBuild is going to step in and solve everything," and that's how you're going to provide infrastructure. First, the infrastructure was needed yesterday, it should have been happening all along; and second, we don't see SuperBuild delivering all these funds and all these cheques yet. Wait until we get closer to the election, though. One of my friends in the official opposition mentioned the other night about watching for all of the large, blown-up cheques that are used for photo ops—which we've all used; I'm not suggesting that's unique to you. But I do buy into the argument that the reason that SuperBuild money is not flowing now is because you'd rather be presenting those nice, big cheques for the nice photo ops much closer to the next election.

Mr McMeekin: To heck with the consequences.

Mr Christopherson: That's right. To heck with the consequences, my friend says. That seems to be what's going on. As if Walkerton wasn't reason enough for you to release funding for infrastructure spending, how about the absolute responsibility that you have to deal with the recession that we're in that you told us we wouldn't be in if we followed your tax cut schemes? There are all kinds of reasons to release the money, to put that money into the community, and only one not to do it. You have a right to do that, but you should be called on it.

In the last couple of minutes I have, I want to just touch further on the \$5 billion. It's interesting. Every time, it seems, that we deal with an issue where the question is of funding and whether it has done damage to the provision of public service, every time we have that debate, we always seem to come across all these other programs that early in the government's mandate they

just called wasteful spending. Whether it was the Liberals doing it or the NDP, it was all just wasteful spending, because, of course, in their minds all public spending is wasteful, except their wages. That's not wasteful and that's something that did need to go up. That was a priority for them, but everything else gets treated much differently.

I raise this point because every time we take a look at what has gone on in the past, lo and behold, we usually discover a program that most often was brought in by the NDP and was of major benefit to the community, whether it's public safety, whether it's health care, education or the provision of affordable housing, which you have totally abdicated responsibility for.

So I want to emphasize that when people hear the arguments from the types across the way in power today in Ontario and others in Canada who argue about getting rid of big government, getting government off the backs of people, getting government out of the way, cutting through red tape, when you hear all of those things, just appreciate that on the other side lies the rest of Ontario. That Ontario isn't independently wealthy and they don't have the money to pay user fees, willy-nilly, or don't get the service, or increased costs that are being passed on through the market, because if we're not paying for it collectively, then you're going to pay for it individually.

That's a great message if you're one of those who has one of the biggest heaps of money in the whole province. If you're in that category of folk, that's the way you want the world. "Slash those tax rates because it means big money." Half a per cent can mean hundreds of thousands of dollars to people who have lots of money. But, more important, to the majority of people who are in the middle class, you lose the most because you've come to rely on an awful lot of public services that you're entitled to. We all pitch in a little bit of money and we collectively make sure it's there, like fire safety, hospitals, police. When budgets are slashed, those services, if you want them, have to be paid for. I don't know about the rest of the members on the side of the government, but I don't know anybody who can build their own hospital and I don't know anybody who is going to save money by paying private insurance premiums rather than having a progressive tax system pay to ensure that we've got health care that covers everybody.

At the end of the day, all these issues are linked. They are all linked together. Your corporate tax cuts, your attack on the education system, your hints about two-tier health care, your refusal to pass a safe drinking water act and the results of Walkerton are all linked and they don't paint a very pretty picture of the Ontario that you've provided to us.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Bradley has moved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario offers its unequivocal support to the people of Walkerton who are calling on the Attorney General to release the report(s) of Chief Justice Dennis O'Connor on the Walkerton tragedy immediately upon their receipt.

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

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1717 to 1727.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm
Baird, John R.	Gerretsen, John	Molinari, Tina R.
Barrett, Toby	Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia
Beaubien, Marcel	Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn
Bisson, Gilles	Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bryant, Michael	Jackson, Cameron	Patten, Richard
Christopherson, David	Johns, Helen	Peters, Steve
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kells, Morley	Ramsay, David
Cleary, John C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Runciman, Robert W.
Colle, Mike	Kormos, Peter	Sampson, Rob
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	Marland, Margaret	Smitherman, George
Cunningham, Dianne	Martel, Shelley	Spina, Joseph
DeFaria, Carl	Martin, Tony	Stewart, R. Gary
Di Cocco, Caroline	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Duncan, Dwight	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dunlop, Garfield	McLeod, Lyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Ecker, Janet	McMeekin, Ted	Wood, Bob

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand.

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

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STUDENT PROTECTION ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ÉLÈVES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 26, 2001, on the motion for third reading of Bill 101, An Act to protect students from sexual abuse and to otherwise provide for the protection of students / Projet de loi 101, Loi visant à protéger les élèves contre les mauvais traitements d'ordre sexuel et à prévoir autrement leur protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Trinity-Spadina. We'll wait for a few seconds to allow the traffic to clear the House. We'll add 10 seconds and the floor will go to the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Thank you for allowing some of the members who have other business to go so that I can have the peace of making a speech on Bill 101, An Act to protect students from sexual abuse and to otherwise provide for the protection of students.

Yesterday I said that this was a bill we support because anything that protects students from sexual predators is a good thing. All the members of this assembly, of course, have stood up in support of the bill and yes, there have been reservations. One of the main reservations that we have spoken to is the fact that many of those teachers in the private system, the ones that you have decided to now fund out of our taxpayers' dollars, are not certified. That means that those teachers who teach students but are not certified are not subject to Bill 101. Therefore, we argue, we are leaving students unprotected by Bill 101, and we argue that it's wrong. If you introduce a bill that is designed to help students, then that bill should cover all teachers, and all teachers should be subject to this law. Many of those uncertified teachers in the private system are not subject to the law; therefore we leave our students vulnerable to sexual predators.

So I have argued, how can you introduce a bill designed to help students and not cover every possible teacher that could potentially commit a crime of this sort against any individual? How could you do that? How could you not provide within this bill or in some form a mechanism to make sure that all students are protected?

Because, you see, if you are a teacher, certified or uncertified, you potentially can abuse someone. You have the trust of students whether you are certified or not. That means they should all be subject to this law. But in the wisdom of this government, some students will not be protected. I ask you folks, why? Why would you do that? Why would you not be intelligent enough to make sure that the criticism that comes from the opposition and others in society is diminished by your introducing a mechanism of sorts that makes certain that all teachers are covered?

You wasted no efforts to make sure that those teachers in the public system who are issued a permit to teach by the minister and are not certified will be covered by this legislation, but many of those in the private system—dare I say half of them? We don't know; we don't have the exact figures—are not covered. You made an effort for those in the public system; you made no effort for those in the private system. I don't understand why M^{me} Ecker would not move expeditiously to deal with this issue.

I don't understand why the finance minister, M. Flaherty, did not move as fast on solving this issue as he did to give taxpayers' dollars to private schools. The illustrious M. Flaherty has been able to find public dollars to fund private schools, and soon enough we will be dealing with the \$5-billion cuts that the member from Management Board says we're going to have to cut because, he says, "We don't have any money in the kitty."

Merciful are we, Ontarians, that Mr Stockwell has joined the leadership debate, because he's the only man in that group of the men and women running for leadership who has been bold enough to say, "If we don't have the money, maybe we shouldn't be giving those tax cuts to the corporate sector and to individuals who otherwise do not need our money." Mr Stockwell is the

only man leading the debate in the Conservative caucus to say, "We have a problem here. We don't have any money in the kitty and maybe we shouldn't be giving it away in income tax cuts if we are in danger of incurring a deficit and/or if we've got to cut five billion bucks out of the programs that we value." God bless Stockwell.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): That would be his riding name.

Mr Marchese: You know something, Monsieur Gilchrist? I suspect that Mr Stockwell, the Minister of Labour—

Someone is trying to intervene in some way, Mr Speaker, but he sat down again.

Mr Gilchrist: Riding names; you know better.

Mr Marchese: I said, "Mr Stockwell, the Minister of Labour"—

Mr Gilchrist: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if after the dozen or so times the member has transgressed, you might remind him we use only riding names in this august chamber.

The Acting Speaker: You're quite correct. The member should know that we use only riding names.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, I said, "Merciful are we that Mr Stockwell, the Minister of Labour," while you were engaged there. I did say "the Minister of Labour." Please, please. I am happy that he's joined this debate, because without him they would all have been, according to the reports of the media and according to M. Harris, all united in this position that they are in support of tax cuts to the corporate sector and to the individuals who are enjoying the fruits of the kindness of this government to give away our money to people who don't need it. I suspect Mr Stockwell, the Minister of Labour, probably has said for years and years to that Conservative caucus, "We are nuts," imitating the mayor of Toronto. "You people are nuts. We're nuts to give away this money that we don't have and that we're going to need down the line."

I suspect, Mr Dunlop, my good buddy, that Mr Stockwell, the Minister of Labour, has from time to time—probably more than from time to time and on a regular basis—reminded you that if you don't have any money, don't give it away in income tax cuts. So M. Flaherty has—

1740

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Uh-oh.

Mr Marchese: The Minister of Finance. Someone is paying attention. I'm glad you're here and paying attention, member from Durham.

The Minister of Finance was so kind to give away your taxpayer's dollars, and now we have Mr Eves—he's not a minister any longer—coming back with that big heart, and he's going to say to you, "If we're going to give our taxpayers money, we're going to make sure they are as accountable in that private system as they are in the public system." Yesterday I argued what's the difference between the Minister of Finance and the former Minister of Finance, M. Eves, with respect to this position of private schools? Very little. They're still both

going to be spending money. It's just that Mr Eves is going to say, "We need to make private schools accountable," and M. Flaherty, the Minister of Finance, says, "No, we don't." What's the difference between the two? Nothing, except we're all going to be spending \$500 million, \$600 million or \$700 million, depending on how many end up in the private school system. We're going to leave our treasury with \$600 million or \$700 million less because this minister has decided, in his wisdom and kindness, to give away our money to those who choose a private education.

Those who choose a private education do so because of class interests, by and large. Those non-denominational schools are, by and large, designed to have those children meet children of the same class as those parents, meaning people who've got money. They want their children to mix with the children of parents who've got money as well. It's a class system. In the non-denominational system, it's not religious in nature, and so some choose to send their children to religious schools because of religion, but the non-denominational ones are class-based.

I as a New Democrat and all New Democrats were unequivocal in our opposition to private schools. Each and every member of the New Democratic Party unequivocally stated, "We do not support private schools because our public system serves everyone well," and that's the way it should be. I can't speak for other political parties, but for ours I can say we were unanimous in our position in this regard.

Yesterday I spoke about how we of course support this bill and how when I attempted to move a motion in the committee—a motion brought forth by children's aid societies that said, "Look, we deal with child abuse. We have the information. We investigate problems before you, school boards, even know about them." The children's aid society urged us to make an amendment that would make sure children's aid societies, which investigate matters of child abuse, would be able to offer that information to the school boards freely, at no expense to us, all designed to protect young men and women who otherwise are potentially abused—not who otherwise, but kids who are abused in the system. They would find out through a report submitted by children's aid to the Ministry of Education and to school boards that something is wrong and here we have a report that we should be using and dealing with as expeditiously as possible, but the committee members rejected that amendment.

My amendment wasn't designed to be ideological. It was not a socialist amendment; it wasn't. It was just a human reaction to a human problem, and we introduced a motion, an amendment to deal with it on the basis that we are protecting young men and women.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I don't have time for that.

There was no ideological interest whatsoever, but the committee unanimously rejected it. They gave me no comfort that somehow this issue would be addressed, yet

this bill was designed to help kids and to protect them, to do preventative work where it was possible. They offered their advice and their expertise, and we rejected it. Each and every single member of the Conservative Party rejected that amendment, and I say it's wrong. When you need them to help you, when you make a useful contribution as an opposition member, they reject each and every one of the proposals you make. It's insane.

These people are the very people who are closing down our schools, the very people whose funding formula is closing our schools. So many of our schools are under threat of closure—St Francis in my riding. In fact, St Lucy's had to close a while ago on the understanding that St Francis would take up those students, and now St Francis is on the chopping block. It's unbelievable what is happening.

Many boards, of course, are strapped. The Catholic board in Toronto is strapped for cash and they are closing schools. I urge the Catholic school trustees to stand up for those families and those students and not close those schools that are so important to our communities.

St Vincent de Paul school in Mr Kennedy's riding is threatened with closure. Many schools are subject to this problem, and I'm saying our communities need our schools. For demographic reasons, I argue, so many people come and go, and often more come than leave. If we had shut down some of the schools in our public system 20 years ago, we would not have had schools for those students who now populate my riding in great numbers.

Please, we support this bill. Changes are drastically needed. Please listen. Help. Convince me that you're making those amendments that will help those young people, men and women all.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): The member for Trinity-Spadina spoke at length the other night, and he had some time today to speak on this bill as well, and I'm certainly pleased to put in my two cents' worth. He spoke at length about choice in education. I know he talked about the religious schools and private schools and whether it's right to fund them or not right to fund them.

I know the question for a long time has been that even the UN said our policies in a way were not quite open in the sense that we were only funding the Catholic schools and francophone schools, but from the point of view of the Jewish schools or Sikh schools or whatever else, we were not funding. I think to level the playing field, the government has gone ahead and made a tough decision and extended funding to those schools. In my community, where we have a Khalsa school, which is a Sikh religious school, they are quite happy about it. I just wanted to add that.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I'm pleased to briefly again join this debate. It is very problematic, I think, that even on an issue such as sexual abuse, we can't have an ideological-free zone in this House. There are members on the other side who cannot

put down their political inclinations and override them on behalf of some of the most vulnerable people in society: children who have been subject to predatory behaviour anywhere in society.

In fact, on the other side of the House, demonstrating a flawed democracy in Ontario today, they rejected six amendments that would have extended the protection of the bill, which we're now in the final throes of discussing here in this House, to all children in this province. It would have extended protection to 50,000 children who are taught by uncertified teachers in private schools. It proposed a reasonable means for doing so. It respected the government's thrust in the sense that they want to put public dollars into private schools. We disagree with that. But it defies logic and it defies any reasonable discharge of responsibility that they would extend that ideological bent to not protecting the children in those schools. It makes no sense.

Further, we put forward amendments to ensure that this wasn't any kind of implication or exercise on public school teachers but on everyone in a trust position. The government argued that we needed to have trust protection in this bill, not because there's a huge problem but simply because it's a delicate situation, with adults charged in a trust position with children. But they rejected extending that to some of the other workers in the system. So we're left with less than what it should be. We're left with an ideologically marred approach, one also that ignores the work of Justice Robins and doesn't provide the resources for the thing the vulnerable children in this province most want from this House: not action after the fact but prevention. The government ignored 12 recommendations by Justice Robins and it's regrettable.

1750

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's always a pleasure to listen to my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. I want to follow up on one of the most important points he raised, a point we've been raising during this debate on this bill: the discrepancy that the government allows to continue in this bill between the treatment of teachers who engage in sexual predation and between non-certified teachers who under this bill can get away with abuse of children. I don't understand how anyone on the government side cannot understand that and cannot want to have this fixed. Surely all of us recognize the positions of trust that teachers, certified or not, in public schools or private schools have with the students they teach. Those students spend enormous amounts of their time during their early years with teachers in a classroom setting. They can be mentors or they can be predators, and we have examples both in public and in private schools of that happening to students. We cannot continue to have the discrepancy the government now allows for in this bill.

So far I've only heard one government member, the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Mr Beaubien, several weeks ago say, "You're right, this is wrong. We need to be sure that whether you're a certified teacher or

a non-certified teacher, private school, public school, everyone has to follow the same rules and everyone has to be responsible. Anyone who is found to be a sexual predator has to pay a price for that, regardless of what system you teach in."

It is incumbent upon this government to protect students, whether they are in a private school or a public school. That's your responsibility and you can do that through mechanisms in this bill. I urge the government, as this bill shuts down, to do the right thing. Protect all students from sexual predators in our classrooms.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I just wanted to very briefly respond to the member for Trinity-Spadina's comments. Once again he's brought some interesting remarks to the debate here, the third reading debate, this afternoon. I just want to say to you that this government and the Minister of Education take the recommendations of Justice Robins very seriously. We think that Bill 101 is a great step in implementing the recommendations toward making our schools safe from any types of sexual predators that may be in the halls of our schools.

On that, I'd like to thank everyone for the debate this afternoon. It's been an honour to speak here.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Speaker: The standing orders provide for 10 minutes for questions and comments in rotation, with a maximum of two minutes per party: eight minutes for members of the assembly and a two-minute remnant for the person whose speech is being commented upon or questioned. I noted that there was over a minute left of the time used by the last questioner and commenter and I'm putting to you, Chair, that that time ought to be part of the overall eight minutes of questions and comments that are allowed to mere backbenchers, the little people, we little people here in the assembly who get to speak so rarely.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. I appreciate the member for Niagara Centre—however, that is not what the standing order says. The standing order says that there will be up to four members who have up to two minutes each, as does the time for response. You are very good in raising this issue just when I've discovered that I've lost the one lens of my glasses and can't read this specifically.

Mr Kormos: In that regard, I apologize and I thank you very much for the Speaker's direction. I really appreciate that, sir.

The Acting Speaker: Response, the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: I appreciate—

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock. The member for Perth-Middlesex.

Mr Johnson: Did you stop the clock before?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Trinity-Spadina, response, two minutes.

Mr Marchese: That's very clever of you, Speaker, because as soon as you stopped the clock, I think he forgot what his point of order was.

Anyway, I want to thank all the four speakers for their comments. The member for Simcoe North argues that this bill is a good step in preventing sexual abuse against students, and he's right and we've argued that, we defend that. We defended several other problems here that you have not spoken to and that's what saddens us on this side.

But before I get to that other point, I want to say to the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale that he argues that, yes, parents have a choice. I argue, as a New Democrat, that if you as a parent choose to send your children to a private school, God bless you, that's where they should go, and you should pay for it, not the taxpayers of Ontario. That is the way we've argued that. He says they like it in his community. I argue, as someone who's very anti-racist and often speaks of those issues in

this place, that if you want people to learn about anti-racism, we do it in the public system.

That's where we teach our young men and women how to grow up as anti-racist kids in a multicultural society. You do not do it by separating kids in different—I was going to say ghettos, but they're not ghettos—ways of isolating the different communities of colour or religion. You do not do it that way.

With respect to this, if you want to protect those students, then protect those students who are not protected in the private schools, because those teachers who are not certified are not subject to this law, and therefore you're leaving some behind.

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

The House adjourned at 1757.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

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Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

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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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